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Some Remarks on the Position of Adverbials in Greek and Vedic Sentences

Thomas Krisch

Abstract

This is a paper dealing mainly with methodological aspects of an investigation of word order of adverbials in ancient Indo-European languages. The two main points discussed are: a) the role valency plays in word order of adverbials (obligatory constituents tend to be placed nearer to the verb than adjuncts). b) the problem of defining the exact position of adverbials in a generative model (using the notion of maximum focus projection as indicator of unmarked word order).

1. A (negatively formulated) definition of “adverbial” in the German academy grammar of 1981 is given under (1):

- (1) Heidolph / Flämig / Motsch 1981, 373: „Ein Satzglied, das weder Subjekt, noch Objekt, noch Prädikativ ist, ist ein Adverbial” (A constituent which is neither subject nor object nor a predicative expression is defined as “adverbial”)

There exists a number of publications about the word order of adverbials in German which aim at presenting a system characterized by a relative freedom of word order in a way compatible with a generative viewpoint (e.g. Brandt / Dietrich / Schön 2006; Frey / Pittner 1998). Two aspects are important in the discussion:

- a) There is a difference in the position of the sentence whether the adverbial constituent is required by the verb or whether it is an adjunct without a nearer connection to the verb
- b) There is a relative freedom of the position of adverbials but there are marked and less marked positions, semantic differences in scope and so on.

Let us first look at the positional aspects. In (2a) one sees that (in the unmarked, unemphatic sentence) the German adverbial “in Salzburg”, which is sub-classified by the verb “live”, is positioned nearer to it than the adverbials “bald”, “wieder” and “glücklich”, which are not required by the verb. On the other hand, when used in a transitive sentence, the adverbial “in Salzburg”, used as a pure adjunct, is outranked by the direct object “Marillenknödel” which is positioned directly adjacent to the verb (2):

- (2) a) (Ich weiß, dass) Laura bald wieder glücklich in Salzburg wohnen wird [lit. (I know that) Laura soon again happily in Salzburg live will]
- b) (Ich weiß, dass) Laura bald wieder glücklich in Salzburg Marillenknödel essen wird [lit. (I know that) Laura soon again happily in Salzburg apricot dumplings eat will]

One should notice that there is much variation of word order in German which is partly explained by different types of focus in the literature. Sentences which exhibit the so called maximal focus projection (scil. everything is put into focus) are considered to show unmarked word order. The sentence with maximal focus projection provides an answer to the question “what happened?”.

Consider the following examples:

- (3) Frey / Pittner 1998, 505:
 Die Tür stand offen (the door remained open)
 a) weil Otto heute mit dem Schraubenzieher die WOHNungstür öffnete
 because Otto today with the screwdriver the aPARTment-door opened
 b) weil Otto heute die Wohnungstür mit dem SCHRAUbenzieher öffnete
 because Otto today the apartment-door with the SCREWdriver opened
 c) weil Otto heute die Wohnungstür mit dem SCHRAUbenzieher ÖFFnete
 because Otto today the apartment-door with the SCREWdriver Opened

Frey and Pittner 1998 point out that sentence (3a) has maximal focus, i.e. it can be the answer to the question “what happened?”¹ Therefore in this sentence the order “object immediately preceding the verb”, preceded by the adverbial “with the screwdriver”, reflects the unmarked order. On the other hand, the adverbial “with the screwdriver” immediately preceding the verb in (3b), can only be interpreted as bearing a narrow focus on “screwdriver”. This could be the answer to someone who e.g. believes that the door was not opened by a screwdriver but by a sledgehammer. (3c) puts a focus on both the screwdriver and the verb, and no maximal reading of the focus covering the whole sentence is possible here.

2. After these theoretical considerations, the rest of the paper deals with examples taken from ancient Indo-European languages.

2.1. Consider the test for a maximal focus which is an indication for unmarked order. This test is more difficult to be carried through in old texts than in living languages, but the situation is not entirely hopeless. One can interpret the sentence in question philologically and look at the context in order to determine whether one has to do with an unmarked or a marked order. Number (4) on the handout contains a Homeric example with a number of adverbials:

- (4) Hom. Il 5.209 – 211:
- | | | | | | |
|------------------|-----------|----------------|--------------------|---------------------|--|
| τῷ | ῥα | κακῇ | αἴσῃ | ἀπὸ πασσάλου | |
| tō | ra | kakēi | aisēi | apò passálou | |
| Therefore | Ptc | bad.Dat | fortune.Dat | from peg.GEN | |
-
- | | | | | | |
|------------|---------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|------|
| ἀγκύλα | τόξα | ἡματι | τῷ | ἐλόμην | ὅτε |
| agkyla | toxa | ēmati | tōi | helomēn1SgImpfMid | |
| curved.Acc | bow.Acc | day.Dat | that.Dat | took | when |
-
- | | | | | | |
|-----------|-----|------------|-----------------|----------------|----------|
| Ἴλιον | εἰς | ἐρατεινὴν | ἡγεόμην | Τρώεσσι | φέρων |
| Ilion | eis | erateinēn | hēgeomēn | Trōēssi | pherōn |
| Ilios.Acc | to | lovely.Acc | led.1PsImpf.Mid | Troians.Dat.Pl | carrying |
-
- | | | |
|--------|------------|----------|
| χάριν | Ἑκτορι | δίῳ. |
| kharin | Hektori | diōi |
| grace | Hector.Dat | heavenly |
- “Therefore **with ill fortune** I took the curved bow and arrow **from the peg on that day** when I led the Troians to lovely Ilios, bringing grace to heavenly Hector”

The causal adverbial τῷ “therefore” appears at the beginning of the sentence, the instrumental adverbial phrase κακῇ αἴσῃ “with ill fortune” and an adverbial phrase

¹ The capital letters in the examples indicate stress.

indicating Source ἀπὸ πασσάλου “from the peg” follow after the Wackernagel particle ὅα and the temporal adverbial ἡματι τῷ “on that day” is positioned directly in front of the verb.

Could this example be taken as evidence for a claim that the unmarked position of temporal adverbials in the Homeric Greek clause could have been a position immediately before the verb? If one looks at the sentence more closely one observes that the temporal adverbial ἡματι τῷ “on that day” possibly could have rhematic, focussed value because the extraposed temporal clause ὅτε Ἴλιον εἰς ἐρατεινὴν ἡγεόμην Τρώεσσι gives weight to the temporal aspect by its length. This rhematic value is an indication of narrow focus, i.e. the temporal adverbial is focussed. As we saw earlier, narrow focus is a diagnosticum for marked and not for unmarked word order.

This sentence-internal observation is confirmed by the context. The context before our sentence runs as follows: The Greek hero Diomedes is raging among the Trojans. Pandaros from Lycia, who is supporting the Trojans, tells Aineias that he has sent an arrow on Diomedes. This arrow hits its target but Diomedes is not severely wounded. Some lines before our sentence Pandaros mentions that he came to Ilios on foot and trusted his bow and that this turned out not to be to his advantage (cf. (5)):

- (5) Hom. Il. 5, 204-205: αὐτὰρ πεζὸς ἐς Ἴλιον εἰλήλουθα τόξοισιν πίσυνος: τὰ δέ μ' οὐκ ἄρ' ἔμελλον ὀνήσειν. “Then I came to Ilios on foot trusting in (my) bow and arrow; but that, meseems, did not be to my advantage”

In our Example (4), the adverbial κακῇ αἴσῃ “with ill fortune” restates “not to be to my advantage” in (5) and the Noun Phrase ἀγκύλα τόξα “curved bow and arrow” in (4) restates the “bow and arrow” in (5). Also parts of the temporal clause in (4)² are a restatement of (5): “came to Ilios”. This leaves the temporal adverbial ἡματι τῷ “on that day” in (4) as new, rhematic material. This day is really the important fatal day for Pandaros because the context following our (4) describes an immediately following further fight between Pandaros and Diomedes, where Pandaros is killed in Verse 296. This importance of the temporal adverbial ἡματι τῷ “on that day” for the following context is strong evidence for the claim that it is focussed material in (4).

Thus, one may conclude that the sentence in (4) cannot be drawn on as case for an unmarked position of a temporal adverb. This example has shown that a kind of focus-test of marked and unmarked word order of adverbials is also partly possible in ancient languages.

2.2. Example (6), on the other hand, shows unmarked word order with focus projection, i.e. with possible wide focus:

- (6) Od 5.33-35:
 ἀλλ' ὃ γ' ἐπὶ σχεδὴς πολυδέσμου πῆματα πάσχων
 all' ho g' epi skhedîs polydesmou pēmata paskhōn
 but he Ptc on raft.GenSg stoutly-bound.GenSg woe.AccPl suffer.Ptc.Pres.NSg.

² ὅτε Ἴλιον εἰς ἐρατεινὴν ἡγεόμην Τρώεσσι φέρων χάριν Ἑκτορι δῖῳ “when I led the Trojans to lovely Ilios, bringing grace to heavenly Hector”

ἡματί	κ'	εἰκοστῷ	Σχερίην	ἐρίβωλον	
ēmati	k	eikostōi	Skheriēn	eribōlon	
day.Dat	Ptc.	twentieth.DatSg.	Scheria.AccSg	big-soiled.AccSg	
ἵκοιτο		Φαιήκων	ἐς	γαῖαν	οἱ
hikoito		Phaiēkōn	es	gaīan	hoi
come.3SgOptAor		Phaiacian.GenPl	to	country.AccSg	who.NomPl
ἀγχίθιοι		γεγάασιν,			
agkhitheoi		gegaasin			
god-like.NomPl		be.born.3PlPerfMedPass			
“But he (scil. Odysseus) shall come to big-soiled Scheria, on a stoutly-bound raft, suffering woes, on the 20th day to the country of the Phaiaceans who are born god-like.”					

Here, the temporal adverbial ἡματί εἰκοστῷ “on the twentieth day” is farther away from the verb of movement ἵκοιτο, but not as far away as the local adverbial ἐπὶ σχεδῆς πολυδέσμου “on a stoutly-bound raft”. Both are put in bold letters. The GOAL, the direction of the movement is divided into two parts. The first part of the GOAL is positioned immediately in front of the verb. It is the pure accusative Σχερίην ἐρίβωλον “to big-soiled Scheria”, indicating the name of the island inhabited by the Phaeacians. The second part, immediately after the verb, is a prepositional phrase with a subordinated relative clause: Φαιήκων ἐς γαῖαν, οἱ ἀγχίθιοι γεγάασιν “to the country of the Phaiaceans who are born god-like.” This sentence is a good candidate for unmarked word order since the whole sentence has got focus. Everything here is new in the situation of a dialogue. The sentence is uttered by Zeus to his son Hermes. Zeus instructs Hermes to go to the nymph Calypso in order to tell her to give a leave to Odysseus. All this is new, rhematic, and can be characterized as a focus projection in the same way as we have seen it in the German example (3a)). Thus the unmarked position of temporal adverbials should be farther away from the verb, in generative terms: farther up the structural tree. In my opinion, it is the task of word order studies in ancient Indo-European languages to look for examples of focus projection to determine the underlying order and to look for focussed single constituents to determine the possibilities for variation and the sentence positions occupied in these cases. This will be part of what I shall try to investigate in the volume on Indo-European word order which will appear in the Winter-Verlag in a few years. If we take sentence (6) as unmarked then it is not surprising that the GOAL of the verb of movement, ἵκοιτο, is positioned in adjacence to the verb, part of it before and part of it after the verb. Verbs of movement have a strong affinity to directionals and we expect these directionals to be directly governed by the verb and therefore to be placed adjacent to the verb.

2.3. Example (6) showed that one can put focus projection to the test in corpus languages by looking at the context. But there are caveats and limits to this procedure which are not present in the investigation of living languages. Recall the German examples in (3). These German sentences form exact minimal pairs only differentiated by intonation. As we all know, it is almost impossible to determine intonation patterns for corpus texts in ancient Indo European languages. That is why we had to resort to a context analysis. Furthermore one normally does not find real minimal pairs in ancient texts. There are rare exceptions to this, for example the Old High German dialogues from Paris (cf. (7)):

- (7) OHG dialogues Paris conversations (10th century AD, cited from Braune / Ebbinghaus 1969, 10; Penzl 1984, 397) (“pattern drill”):

51. Gimer min ros (lat. da mihi meum equum) “Give me my horse”
 52. Gimer min schelt (lat. scutum) “Give me my shield”
 53. Gimer min spera (lat. spata) “Give me my spear”
 54. Gimer min suarda “Give me my sword”
 55. Gimer min ansco [scil. hantscuoh, TK] (mlat. guantos) “Give me my gloves”
 56. Gimer min stap (lat. fustⁱⁿ) „Give me my staff“
 57. Gimer min matzer (lat. cultellum) “Give me my knife”

3. Now, I want to mention a second aspect which one has to keep in mind when dealing with word order of adverbials in ancient Indo-European languages. In section 2., we have argued with valency / government as one of the factors relevant for the position. But the borderline between governed elements and adverbial adjuncts in ancient Indo-European languages is sometimes not so easy to define.

3.1. Hettrich 1990, 97 has shown this fact using Vedic examples. He illustrates this by analysing the valency of ved. *sac-* with the rough semantic spectrum “to follow, affiliate to, be united with”. Hettrich’s conclusion runs as follows:

- (8) Hettrich 1990, 97 (my translation) “[In the case of ved. *sac-*], the accusative, instrumental, and locative fill the position of the second “actant” [note: the first “actant” (= constituent required by the verb) is always the subject, TK]. Thus, this position is filled with more than one case, but the choice of the cases is restricted to the three cases mentioned. Therefore one can call this “government”. This fact does not prevent an opposition between the governed cases: They carry their autonomous functions also to be seen in other syntactic environments.”

In (9), one example is given for each of the constructions mentioned in (8):

- (9) a) accusative: RV 1,66,2
 tákvā ná bhúrñir [vánā]_{DP/NP} siṣakti
 predator.NomSg like savage.NomSg tree.CollAcc head.3SgPrs
 “Like a savage predator he [scil. Agni, the fire(god)] heads towards / follows the wood.”
- b) instrumental: RV 1,183,2d
 [divó duhitṛ_ā uśásā]_{DP/NP} sacethe
 heaven.GenSg daughter.InstSg Uśas.InstrSg be.united.with.2DuPrsMid
 “You two [scil.the Aśvin] accompany / follow Uśas, the daughter of heaven.”
- c) RV 5,64,3: locative
 [áśya priyáśya śármayá áhimsānasya]_{NP/DP}
 Dem.pron.GenSg dear.one.GenSg protection.LocSg not.hurting.one.GenSg
 saścīre
 reach.3PIPerfMid
 “They have reached the protection of this dear one, the not hurting one.”

In (9a), an accusative is used which still partly reflects the concrete meaning of an accusative of direction. The predator wants to reach its prey and is heading towards it. Hettrich 1990: 93 shows that, when ved. *sac-* governs an accusative DP/NP, there is no semantic restriction on the subject. The subject slot can be filled by abstract nouns (*dyumnāni* “gloriousness”, RV 3,40,7), concrete nouns (example (9a)) and animate nouns

(partly in example (9a))³; the twin-gods Ásvin in RV 3,39,3; the worshipper in RV 4,12,2). On the other hand, the subject of sentences where ved. *sac-* governs an **instrumental** DP/NP is restricted to animate nouns (namely to men and gods). The comitative reading is something which is typical for animate beings. This is exemplified by (9b). (9c) shows that the locative is not just governed by the verb but also adds to the semantics the nuance of a GOAL reached.

Hettrich argues convincingly that all these constructions are examples for the semantics of ved. *sac-* which “denotes a movement which is caused and controlled by a goal / object” (Hettrich 1990, 97; my translation). This goes well with the theory that the Germanic follower of the PIE verbal root *sek^u- (which preceeds the Vedic *sac-*), PGmc *seh^u- in *seh^u-anam “to see” (the predecessor of e.g. OHG *sehan*, NHG *sehen*, OE *sēon*, NE *see*) was caused by the semantic shift of extension of the meaning of “following” in the context of hunting (cf. Strunk 2004, 192-193), where the movement of the hunter is controlled by the goal / object (the deer).

3.2. As pointed out earlier, one would expect that the governed constituent is adjacent to the verb.⁴ This also seems to be the case if one looks at the above Vedic examples for *sac-*. In (9a)), the noun phrase in the accusative case form, *vānā* “wood”, is situated directly in front of the finite verb *siṣakti* “heads towards” and in addition to that there is material in front of it. Also the instrumental in (9b)) the noun phrase bearing the instrumental case form and an apposition to it (*divó duhitṛā uśāsā* “Uśās, the daughter of heaven”), is located immediately in front of the verb. In (9c)), the noun phrase bearing the locative and two attributive genitives depending on it (*ásya priyásya śármany áhiṁsānasya* “the protection of this dear one, the not hurting one”) is placed in front of the verb form *saścire* “they have reached”. In the two last cases, though, the only constituent before the verb is the constituent in question. One needs longer sentences like (9a)) to determine which position an element occupies.

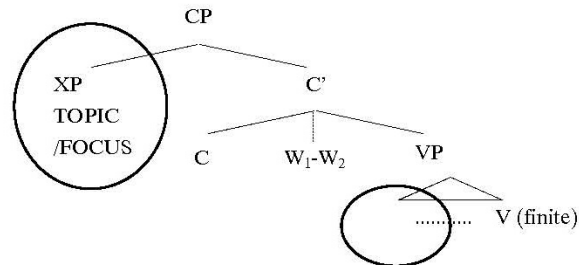
The postulated position also depends on the model, the building plan of the sentence. I have slightly modified the model which I so far have been working with in a number of papers (e.g. Krisch 2009, 2004, 1998) leaving out the IP functional node [as Haider 2010:299) does with good reasons for his analysis of the OV language German]. This model offers several positions which a noun phrase can occupy (cf. table 1)⁵:

³ Agni is the natural fire (which surely represents the main meaning in (9a)) and also the god of fire.

⁴ cf. the prepositional object “in Salzburg” in (2a), the accusative object “Marillenknoedel” in (2b) and the accusative object Σχερτήν ἐρβωλον in the Greek example (6).

⁵ Abbreviations: CP= complementiser phrase, C= complementiser, C': intermediate projection of C smaller than a phrase but larger than a word; W₁ and W₂: Wackernagel positions; VP: verbal phrase; V: verb; V': intermediate projection of V smaller than a phrase but larger than a word; XP: phrase of any kind.

Table 1



A noun phrase could be situated in a number of positions inside the Verb Phrase (the rightmost lowest circle) or it could be in TOPIC position in Spec CP (the leftmost circle of table 1). If one takes this model, then the governed Noun Phrase [divó duhitr_á ušásā]_{DP/NP} of example (9b), which was dealt with earlier, could in theory occupy these circled structural positions (see table 2 – table 4).

Table 2

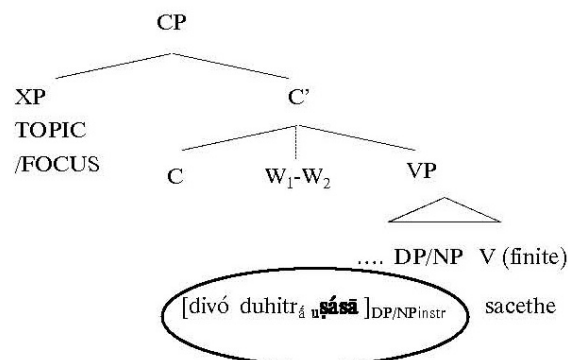


Table 3

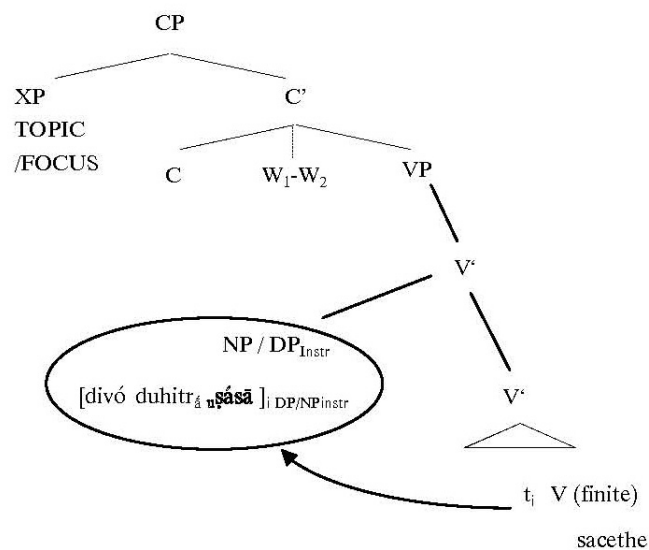
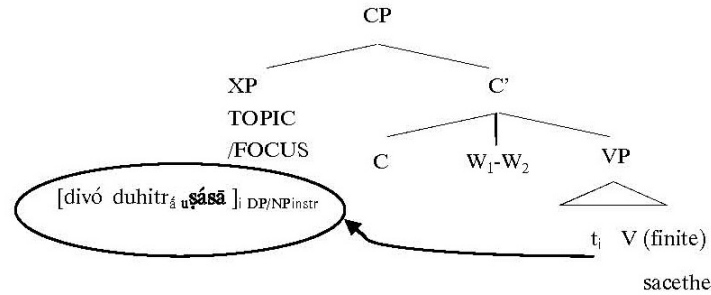


Table 4



How can one decide which position is the right one? I think, one should use Ockham's razor cited in (10):

- (10) Ockham's (1280/5-1347/9) razor (formulation attributed to Johannes Clauberg (1622-1665), cf. e.g. Vollmer 2006-2008, 27): *entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem* "(theoretical) entities not are to be multiplied beyond necessity" (more sloppy translation: "All other things being equal, the simplest solution is the best")

As long as there is no good reason to think of the contrary, one has to assume that the position in the underlying structure corresponds to the position on the surface. This sentence does not have any special focus on one of the constituents. See the translation of the whole verse by Witzel and Gotō in (11):

- (11) (Witzel / Gotō 2007, 333, my English translation) "Your chariot [scil. the one of the Ásvin, TK] is rolling easily, in order to have strengthening power, when it reaches the earth, when you stand behind it, endowed with wit. This song of welcome may accompany your wonderous appearance when looking for wonderous appearance. **You follow Uśas the daughter of heaven.**"

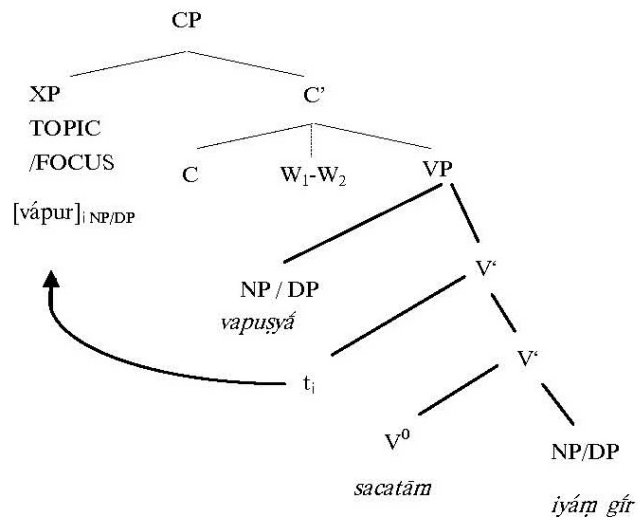
That means for our Vedic sentence that table 2 with the instrumental phrase inside VP in verb-adjacent position is the best solution as long as we do not know any good reasons why the Noun Phrase should have moved to a higher position.

Now a final point: We stay inside the same stanza in the Rigveda and take the verse before the verse we just looked at, cf. (12):

- (12) RV 1,183,2c-d:
- | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>vápur</i> | | <i>vapuṣyá</i> |
| miraculous.appearance.AccSg | | miraculous.appearance.InstrSg |
| <i>sacatām</i> | <i>īyám</i> | <i>gīt /</i> |
| follow.3sgImpvMid | this.NomSgfm | song.NomSgfm |
- (very literal translation!) "There shall head forward to (your) miraculous appearance by miraculous appearance this song."

As far as one can say within such a difficult text as is the Rigveda, this sentence has focus on the “extraposed”⁶ subject *iyám gír*. The strange literal English translation in (12) tries to mirror this fact. The subject is the song and the miraculous appearance is the appearance of the two Ásvín, the helping gods of the Rigveda, who visit persons in need. The Ásvín is what hymn 1,183 is all about. Thus they are a TOPIC, contained in the word *vapur*. What is more difficult to determine is whether we can evoke an analysis like in table 5 where *vapur* is moved to TOPIC position. I would favour this analysis which allows us to maintain an unmarked position of the governed element *vapur* directly in front of the verb in deep structure as illustrated in table 5:

Table 5



⁶ As table 5 shows, the “extraposed” constituent is analysed as occupying a structural position here (following Haider (2010:233)).

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