

Verb Initial Languages

Egg summer school in Brno, July/August 2007

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VSO IN CELTIC

I. Intro to central issues

In the first meeting we will look at the issues that arise with VSO languages, how to analyse them, what challenges they pose to syntactic theory. We will also have an overview of some of the characteristic properties of VSO languages. The handout contains the central data.

- (1) Labhrann Mícheál Gaeilge le Cáit (Irish)
speaks Mícheál Irish to Cáit
'Mícheál speaks Irish to Cáit.'
- (2) Chunnaic mi Iain an dé (Scots Gaelic)
saw I John yesterday
- (3) Gwelodd Mair y ddamwain. (Welsh)
saw-3S Mair the accident
'Mair saw the accident.'
- (4) Emañ Yann war an hent (Breton)
is Yann on the road
'Yann is on the road.'

Analytic approaches

1. No VP constituent;
2. VSO order derived by movement from underlying SVO order

- **VP-constituent?**

- i. **S/O asymmetries**

- (5) a. Chonaic Seán agus Máire lena chéile. (Carnie 1995)
saw John and Mary with3P other
'John and Mary saw each other.'
- b. Chonaic lena chéile Seán agus Máire.
saw with3P other John and Mary
'*Each other saw John and Mary.'

- ii. **Word order in non-finite clauses: ... [S V O]**

- (6) a. Ba mhaith liom [sibh a bheith anseo]. (I)
I-would like you(PL) to be here
'I would like you to be here.'

- b. Ní thaitníonn leat [mé a dhíol an chaora]
 NEG pleases with-you me to sell the sheep
 'It does not please you [for me to sell the sheep]'
- (7) Mi ddisgwylíodd John [i [Gwyn weld Mair]. (W; Hendrick 2000)
 PRT expect John to Gwyn see Mair
 'John expected Gwyn to see Mair.'
- (8) Ret e oa da [Yann deskiñ brezhoneg] (B; Hendrick 2000)
 necessary PRT be-IMPERF to Yann study Breton
 'It was necessary for Yann to study Breton.'

iii. **Aux SVO**

- (9) a. Tá sé ag casadh amhráin. (I; McCloskey 1996)
 is he ASP sing-VN a-song
 'He is singing a song.'
- b. Tá sé ag léamh an leabhair. [New Irish Grammar, Christian Brothers]
 is he read.PROG the book
 'He is reading the book.'

iv. **VP constituency tests: VP-clefting (??)** (more likely AspP/PP clefting)

- (10) (Is) ag péinteáil cathaoir a bhí an fear inné (I; Ó Siadhail 1989:236)
 (COP) ASP paint a-chair PRT was the man yesterday
 'It's painting a chair that the man was yesterday.'

→ VSO is derived through a rule of verb movement (Emmonds 1980)

• **Position of subject & finite verb?**

- i. 'V2' language minus filled Spec,CP requirement: Subj to Spec,IP & V-to-C

Problem: no matrix/embedded asymmetries

- (11) Dúirt siad [gur chonaic siad Seán.] (I)
 said-3ps they that saw they Seán
 'They said that they saw Seán.'

V2 Complementizer and I-to-C in complementary distribution

- (12) a. I wonder [if she left].
 b. I wonder [did she leave] (Hiberno English)
 c. *I wonder if did she leave.
- (13) a. If she had left on time, she would have ...
 b. Had she left on time, she would have ...
 c. * If had she left on time, she would have ...
- (14) a. Ich weiss [dass er nach Berlin gefahren ist.]
 I know that he to Berlin driven is

- b. Ich weiss [er ist nach Berlin gefahren].
 c. *Ich weiss dass er ist nach Berlin gefahren.

ii. **V-to-I and subject *in situ*?** [CP C [TP V [vP Subj t_v ...]

Consequences of analysis:

A. VP-ellipsis

- (15) a. Question: Ar cheannaigh siad é?
 Q bought they it
- b. Positive answer: Cheannaigh.
 bought '(Yes) They did [~~buy-it~~]'
 → Cheannaigh [~~siad-t_v-é~~]
- c. Negative answer: Níor cheannaigh.
 NEG bought '(No) They didn't [~~buy-it~~]'
 → Níor cheannaigh [~~siad-t_v-é~~]
- (16) a. Question: Ar thóg sí teach dófa ar an Mhullach Dubh?
 Q raise she a-house for-them on the Mullaghduff
 'Did she build a house for them on Mullaghduff?'
- b. Answer: Dúirt Sean gur thóg.
 said Sean that raised
 'Sean said she did.'

Ellipsis in tag questions:

- (17) Glanfaidh tú an bord, an nglanfaís?
 clean-FUT you the table, Q clean
 'You will clean the table, will you?'

B. Raising constructions; prediction?

→ Subject of embedded clause should remain *in situ* (that is, it should not move)

- (18) Thaibhsigh dó na soilse a bheith níos boige. (I)
 seemed to-him the lights to be more soft.
 'The lights seemed to him to be softer.'
 English: [TP [The lights] seemed to him [t to be softer]]
 Irish: [TP Thaibhsigh dó [na soilse a bheith níos boige]]
 Seemed to-him the lights to be softer

- *there*-constructions

- (19) a. Milk is on the table. [TP [Milk] is [PP t on the table]]
 b. There is milk on the table. [TP There is [PP milk on the table]]

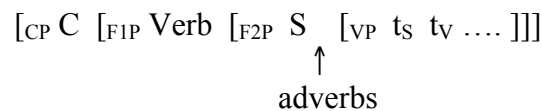
Irish: no *there*-insertion.

- (20) a. Tá bainne ar an mbord.
is milk on the table
'There is milk on the table.'
- b. Bhí cóta ar chathaoir anseo inné.
was a-coat on the chair here yesterday
'There was a coat on a chair here yesterday.'

Problem for Subject-*in-situ* position: placement of certain adverbs

- (21) a. Ní bhfuair aon bhean **riamh roimhe** greim láimhe air. (I; McCl 1996a:269)
NEG took any woman ever before-it grip hand.GEN on-him
No woman had ever before taken his hand.'
- b. Níor smaoinigh mé **ariamh** ó shin air go dtí anois. (I; McCl 1996a:269)
NEG.PAST thought I ever since on-it until now.
'I never thought about it since until now.'

iii. V raises and Subject raises (McCloskey 1996, Bobaljik&Carnie 1996, and others)



- Head movement or remnant VP (vP)-movement?

II. Characteristic properties of V-initial languages

- Anti-agreement/complementarity (see below)
- Preverbal particles; initial consonant mutations
- Verbal nouns
- Non-verbal predicate initial structures
- Wh-constructions
 - Two strategies in A-bar constructions (movement vs. resumptive strategy)
 - Wh-questions as clefts

Anti-Agreement with overt DPs

Subject agreement

- (22) a. D'imreodh na páistí/siad anseo. (I)
play-COND3S the children/they here
'The children/they would play here.'
- b. *D'imroidís na páistí/siad anseo.
play-COND-3P the children/they here
- c. D'imroidís anseo.
play-COND-3P here
'*pro* would play here.'

- (23) a. Bremañ e labour ar vugale (B; Hendrick 2000:30)
 today PRT work-3S the children
 'Today the children work.'
 b. Bremañ e labouront.
 today PRT work-3PL
 'Today they work.'
- (24) a. gwelodd y dynion y ci (W; Sadler 1988)
 saw-3S the men the dog
 'The men saw the dog.'
 b. *gwelsant y dynion y ci
 saw-3PL the men the dog
 c. gwelsant (hwy) y ci
 saw-3pl (they) the dog
 'They/*pro* saw the dog.'

Prepositions

- (25) a. Bhí mé ag caint leis inné (I)
 was I PROG talk with.3S yesterday
 'I was talking to him yesterday'
 b. *leis Seán
 *with-3sm Seán
 c. le Seán
 with Seán
- (26) a. Mae Wyn yn sôn am y dyn (W)
 is-3S Wyn PROG speak about the man
 b. *Mae Wyn yn sôn amdano y dyn
 is-3S Wyn PROG speak about-3SM the man
 c. Mae Wyn yn sôn amdano (ef) / *am ef
 is-3S Wyn PROG speak about-3SM (him)
 'Wyn is speaking about him.'

Nouns

- (27) a. teach Eoghain (I)
 house Owen.GEN
 b. Mo theach
 1s house 'my house'
- (28) Mae Wyn yn prynu ei dy (ef) (W; Sadler 1988: 123)
 is-3S Wyn PROG buy 3SM house (him)
 'Wyn is buying his house.'

VN

- (29) Bhí siad ag mo chuartú. (I; Hale &McCloskey 1984:512)
were they PROG 1s seek
'They were looking for me.'
- (30) Mae Siôn yn ei ddarllen (ef) (W; Sadler 1988)
is-3S Siôn PROG 3S read (it)
'Siôn is reading it.'

Object Agreement (= infix pronouns) in Literary Welsh (LW)

- (31) a. Fe'th welodd (di) (LW; Sadler 1988:75)
PRT-2S saw-3S (you)
'He/She saw you.'
- b. Ni'th gosba (di).
NEG-2S punish-FUT-3S you
'He/she will not punish you.'