

At the outset of the Minimalist period (Chomsky 1993, 1995), several influential articles directly associated the freedom of word order in languages such as German and Dutch (Neeleman 1994, Neeleman & Reinhart 1998) and Japanese and Korean (Fukui 1993, Fukui & Saito 1998) to the *head-final* status of those languages. Fukui (1993), for example, argues for the PVP, a principle that allows optional phrasal movement (“scrambling”) only if it conforms to basic head-complement directionality. Thus, in head-final languages, (leftward) Scrambling is costless to the computational system, and therefore always available as an option: “to the best of my knowledge, most ... ‘Scrambling’ languages [Korean, Japanese, German, Dutch, etc.] ... conform to the pattern predicted by the PVP measure ..., [*no instance of ‘Scrambling’ in those languages involves movement of a complement over a head*]” (Fukui 1993: 417). Similarly, Neeleman and Reinhart (1998: 311) observe “there is a strong typological correlation between OV order and Scrambling on the one hand, and VO order and verb-object adjacency on the other.”

Since that time, the Slavic languages have been the elephant in room with regard to the derivation of free word order patterns, apparently not conforming to the expectation that head-initial languages should allow freedom of word order. Various non-derivational approaches have been proposed to account for such behavior, from base-generation (Van Gelderen 2003, Titov, 2003) to Haider & Szucsich’s important 2021 claim that Slavic are not in fact head-initial languages in the traditional sense, but rather a different kind, which they call “T3”, in which both head initial and head final orders are equally available.

In this paper, we present an alternative to both base-generation and T3 approaches that maintains a strictly head-initial approach to Slavic, while still accounting for its unusual word order behavior. First, we present both empirical and theoretical arguments why a head-initial approach to Slavic should not be abandoned: (i) fixed directionality of both lexical and, crucially, functional categories (shown in Russian in 1a-h), many allowing essentially no alternatives (with important exceptions within VP and TP that we discuss in detail). We focus on VP internal orders, the hallmark of the non-derivational approaches and show that the freedom allowed by other approaches over-generate wildly: in particular CP > V structures are just as unavailable in Slavic as they are in both English (head-initial) and German (either mixed – standard analysis) or head-initial, in the style of Kayne 1994 and Zwart 1998. Thus the alternatives to (1e) and (1f) shown in (2) are unavailable, regardless of complementizer types and abstracting away from discourse-driven CP fronting. Furthermore, known acquisition patterns, going back to Gvozdev 1949/1961, show clear head-initial acquisition patterns.

The crucial case, then, is that of SOV orders, such as (3), which are not only available, but highly common, and as Haider & Szucsich 2021 correctly point out, do not have the expected hallmarks of Object Shifted constructions. That is, though Mykhaylyk’s account of (3b) as the product of Middle field scrambling is possible, it is also clear that some SOV constructions do not behave as expected. The evidence pointing to a non Object-Shift analysis is summarized in (4), taken from IS neutrality, scope behavior, adverb placement and lack of Holmberg effects. To account for this behavior, we follow the spirit, though not the details of a suggestion found in Bailyn (2021), whereby certain heads and complements can undergo “super local movement”, that is, movement from complement position to Specifier position as shown in (5), which we show accounts for the properties found in Slavic SOV constructions as well as in certain stylistic PP interruption constructions whereby an adnominal genitive intervenes between a preposition and its complement – which could only result from Super Local movement. (Bailyn’s Tree Twisting version, which we conclude is inferior derivationally, is shown in (6)).

We conclude with a discussion of the theoretical impact of such a proposal. First, what does it mean for movement theory in general for such an operation to be available? It is certainly in apparent defiance of Grohmann’s (2011) anti-locality restriction shown in (7).. However, even Grohmann allows for Super Local Movement from the complement of non-phase heads. Second, what does it mean for theories of spell-out and in particular linearization, both in Kayne’s 1994 sense and in the domain-based theory of Fox & Pesetsky (2006). We argue that this approach pushes us towards a certain PF-oriented component within syntax, whereby head directionality is not purely a function of linearization, as indeed suggested by Kayne 2022 but “written in”: to the syntax itself. If the approach stands, both the essentially head-initial nature of the Slavic languages and the unusual word order patterns often cited, can be accounted for without abandoning basic notions of derivational, configurational syntax.

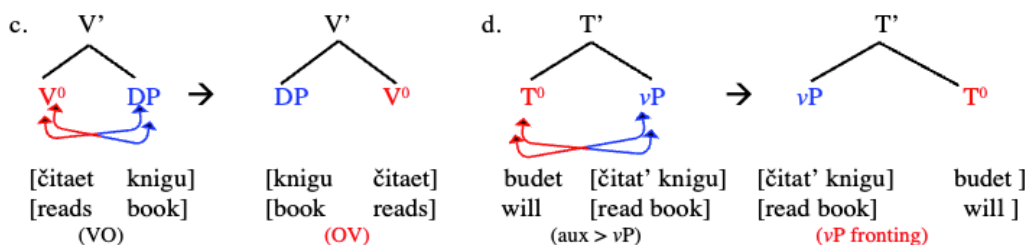
Head-Complement Order and ‘Super-Local Movement’ in Slavic

- 1) a. mimo [otkrytyx dvorej] (PP = P < DP)
past_P [open doors]_{DP}
b. s [pjat’ju [novymi knigami]] (QP = Q < DP)
with [five_Q [new books]_{NP}]
- c. deti [proxodnyx dvorov] (NP = N < QP_{GEN})
children_N [through courtyards]_{QP}
d. v [èto [složnoe vremja]] (DP = D < NP)
in [this_D [complex time]_{NP}]
- e. xotjat, [čtoby Saša ušel] (VP = V < CP)
want_V [that Sasha left]_{CP}
f. čto [Saša napisal pesnju] (CP = C < TP)
that_C [Sasha wrote song]_{TP}
- g. budem [pet’ mnogo pesen] (TP = T < vP)
will_T [sing many songs]_{vP}
h. kak [izbalovannye deti] (PredP = Pred < DP)
like_{PRED} [spoiled children]_{DP}
- 2) a. *Boris [čto_{INDIC} / čtoby_{SUBJ} Saša napisal knigu] xotel / znal (*CP>V)
Boris [that / that Sasha write a book]_{CP} wanted_v / knew_v
- 3) a. Taras knigu čitaet (RU)
Taras_{NOM} book_{ACC} reads
“Taras is reading a book.” (SOV)
b. Taras knyžku čytaje (UKR)
Taras book_{ACC} Reads
“Taras is reading a book.” (SOV)
(Mykhaylyk 2011)

- 4) Unexpected properties of Slavic SOV on Object Shift analyses:
I. No discourse givenness or specificity effect
II. Low adverbs can precede the pre-verbal object
III. No Holmberg effect (same with aux as without)
IV. No evidence of having moved over the base position of the subject

5) Super-local Movement [X^0 YP] → [YP [X^0 <YP>]] (derives DP > V⁰, etc)

6) (cf “Tree-Twisting” in Bailyn 2021)



7) Grohmann’s (2011) anti-locality ban:

Ban on Compl-to-Spec
*[_{XP} YP_i [_{X'} X⁰ ~~YP_i~~]]

8) Revised anti-locality ban: * [YP [X^0 <YP>]] where X⁰ is a phase head, (otherwise allowed)

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