

## Towards a typology of word order variation in the Uralic languages

Andreas Schmidt, andrea06@uni-potsdam.de  
Department Linguistik, Universität Potsdam

In this talk, it will be argued that the underlying word order of a language determines the kind of word order variability found within a language. It will be shown that there are several differences in the postverbal word order variability of Estonian and Finnish as predicted by the derivationally underlying order of the VP: the Estonian VP is head-final, whereas the Finnish VP is not. Each of these differences and analyses will be backed up with data from further Uralic languages: Udmurt, South Sámi, and North Sámi. As a result, a part of Vilkuna's (1998, p.178) descriptive classification of Uralic word order types will be shown to correlate with further properties that can be captured in structural terms: the *non-rigid SOV* type has an underlying OV base order with optional verb-raising (Estonian, Udmurt, South Sámi), whereas the “*Western*” *SVO* type has an underlying VO base order (Finnish, North Sámi). As such, this presentation will be a contribution towards the syntactic typology of the Uralic languages.

Estonian and Finnish share most of their grammatical properties (Metslang, 2009), and both Estonian (Ehala, 2006) and Finnish (Vilkuna, 1989) are acknowledged as languages with flexible word order. While there is extensive research on word order variability in Finnish, there is only a comparatively small but growing number of systematic studies on this topic in Estonian and other Uralic languages (sans Hungarian). The differences below the surface similarities and their possible explanations are outlined in what follows. The predictions about VP-asymmetries between Estonian and Finnish are mostly based on assumptions about the derivation of information-structurally neutral word orders put forward by Neeleman (2015). The main assumptions are, first, that movement can only be leftward, and second, that neutral word orders of a phrase XP can only involve head-movement of X or movement of phrases containing X. As a result, information-structurally unmarked OV-orders cannot be derived from a VO-base order, since this would have to involve phrasal movement of O, or rightward movement of V. Accordingly, directly preverbal objects in Finnish and North Sámi cannot be neutral information foci, which sets them apart from Estonian, South Sámi, and Udmurt (and OV languages in general, Czypionka, 2007). The same theory also predicts that information-structurally unmarked alternations between surface OV and VO order – as documented for Udmurt (Tánczos, 2010) – should only be possible from an OV-base, via leftward-movement of the verb, thereby stranding objects and foci in postverbal position (cf. Skopeteas & Fanselow, 2010). This ‘free’ OV/VO-alternation is present in Estonian, but not in Finnish. Further evidence for the stranding of postverbal foci in lieu of a structural, sentence-final focus position stems from a comparison to sentence-final foci in Finnish (Manninen, 2003) and Russian. Different basic VP-orders also predict differences in scope interactions (Janke & Neeleman, 2012). In Estonian, postverbal elements always exhibit surface scope such that word order changes are able to enhance scope and create scope ambiguities (= German/Japanese-type A-scrambling, Haider, 2010), whereas in Finnish, ditransitive constructions show English-like scope ambiguities, and changes in word order do not influence scopal interpretations (= A-bar-scrambling).

The results obtained from the languages of this talk are to be seen as a stepping stone for future research with further Uralic languages and further syntactic properties.

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