



# Order of subject and verb and word-stress location



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## Question

- ◆ What kind of languages may have VS order?

## Proposal

- The order of subject and verb correlates with word-stress location in the world's languages.
- Languages with right-hand stress are more likely to have VS order than languages with left-hand stress.

## Data (WALS Online)

- Order of S and V in intransitive clauses (#82A)

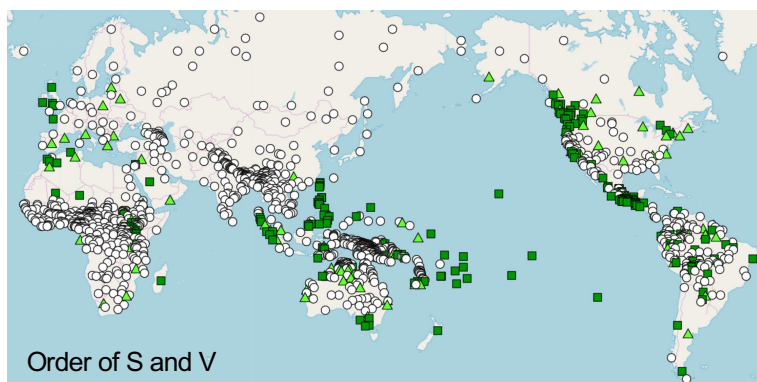
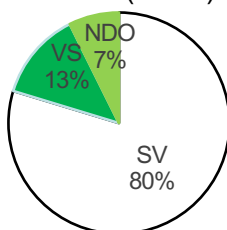
SV ○ 1,193 79.7%

VS ■ 194 13.0%

NDO ▲ 110 7.3%

Total 1,497 100%

(NDO = no dominant order)



- Why is SV order is common in the world?

- Dryer (2013):

- Subjects tend to be topics which should precede predicates (Tomlin 1986)
- But *many languages* seem to place topical elements late in clauses (Givón 1983).

## References

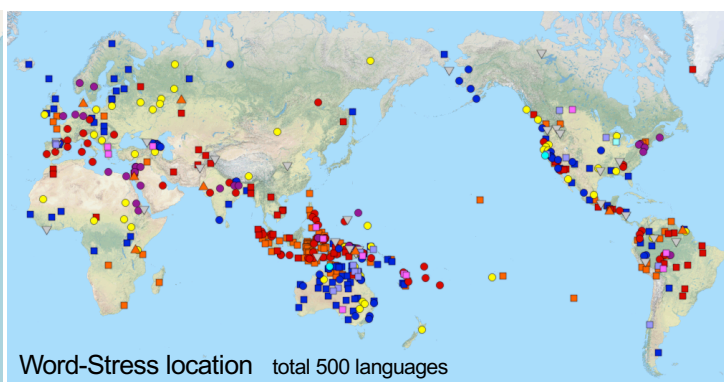
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## The correlation between word order and stress

- Order of head and complements (e.g. OV): Bally 1944, Donegan & Stampe 1983, Tokizaki 2011, Tokizaki & Kuwana 2013 (cf. Plank 1998)
- Languages with left-hand stress tend to have head-final order (e.g. OV, NP-P)
- Languages with right-hand stress tend to have head-initial order (e.g. VO, P-NP).

## Order of subject and verb

- Languages with left-hand stress are more likely to have SV than languages with right-hand stress.
- Languages with right-hand stress are more likely to have VS than languages with left-hand stress.
- ◆ Word-stress parallels phrasal stress (word-L = phrase-L; word-R = phrase-R).
- ◆ Subjects should be stressed (SV; VS).



■ Initial 92	■ Second 16	■ Third 1	■ Antepenultimate 12	■ Penultimate 110	■ Ultimate 51
● Left-edge: First or second 37	● Right-edge: Ultimate or penultimate 65	● Left-oriented: One of the first three 2	● Right-oriented: One of the last three 27	● Unbounded 54	● Combined 8
▽ Not predictable 26					

#lang	Initial	Second	Antep	Penult	Ultim	Sum
SV	56	5	5	34	24	124
NDO	8	1	2	12	4	27
VS	5	1	2	17	4	29
Sum	69	7	9	63	32	180

#lang	L-ed	L-ori	Unpr	Unbn	Cmbn	R-ori	R-ed	Sum
SV	18	1	14	29	4	14	25	105
NDO	4	0	1	4	0	4	5	18
VS	2	0	2	6	1	1	8	20
Sum	24	1	17	39	5	19	38	143

#lang	ISLeLo	APURoRe	Sum
SV	80	102	182
NDO	13	27	40
VS	8	32	40
Sum	101	161	262

Chi-squared test  
p < 0.05

#lang	ISLeLo	APURoRe	Sum
SV	80	102	182
NDO+VS	21	59	80
Sum	101	161	262

Chi-squared test  
p < 0.01