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## Discourse Function and Word Order Shift:

### A Typological Study of the VS/SV Alternation

Paul J. Hopper

#### 1. The VSO/SVO/SOV Typology: Some General Remarks

The present paper grows out of a concern to integrate more closely those generalizations which are made about the typology of word order with some recent work on the relationship between word order and discourse pragmatics.<sup>1</sup>

The former, that is, the study of word order universals and word order types, derives mainly from the work of Joseph Greenberg, especially his article of 1966, and subsequent concerns to refine this, including Lehmann 1972, 1978, and Hawkins 1983. The bibliography of work on the pragmatics of word order is by now quite considerable, and includes the papers in Li (ed.), 1975, and numerous studies of individual languages. A number of works on word order pragmatics have moreover attempted to combine pragmatics with the word order typology, e.g., Hopper 1971; Givón 1975.

The necessity to combine the study of word order types with discourse pragmatics emerges from two considerations. One is the problem of the notion "basic word order." Despite Hawkins' optimism (1983:12 et pass.), typological generalizations depend on a uniform notion of "basic sentence type" which is far from easy to establish either cross-linguistically

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or within a single language. In extreme cases an extensive study of texts reveals no consistent pattern of word order which could be called "basic" in a syntactic sense, and it becomes crucial to study the discourse uses of various word order types. Brody (1984) has suggested that although individual languages may possess a "basic word order," the discourse function of this basic word order is not consistent from language to language, and may not correspond to any simple criterion such as textual frequency, ease of processing, or lack of ambiguity. This conclusion, too, would point to the possibility of broad textual conditioning for word order, and would vitiate any hope of postulating a "basic" word order independent of context.

In Hopper 1971 a semantic criterion for basic word order was proposed, which was based on Prague School syntactic theory and influenced by the work of Wallace Chafe on new and old information (1970). This criterion can be worded as follows:

The Basic Sentence Type in a language is that in which the Subject is old or topical, and the focus of new information falls on the Predicate.

The typological class membership of a "Free Word Order" (FWO) language would then depend on the word order in the basic sentence type thus defined, and it would no longer be necessary to consider adding a special type of FWO languages. Nonetheless the semantic criterion has the defect that it ignores the fact that the semantic distribution of information in a clause is itself derivative of discourse, and that it is only in a specific discourse context that it makes sense to speak of "new" and "old" material, or of "theme" and "rheme."

A second motivation for considering pragmatics in the discussion of word order typology is the need to account for change. Admittedly this necessity derives in the first place from a pragmatic view of word order. If word order is viewed as a syntactic structural phenomenon, then change might conceivably be viewed as a set of ordered adjustments, each of which occurs as the language strives to re-establish typological equilibrium. My own view is that "grammar" is not as systematic and homogeneous as the syntactic-structuralist view would hold. In fact I would see what is

called "grammar" as a rather random and disconnected set of regularities which have emerged from discourse over time and are continually in a process of sedimentation (grammaticization), fossilization, and perhaps disappearance; some further discussion of this view is presented in my paper Hopper (1986 [to appear]).

This view is at odds with any attempt to study a fixed "synchronic" cross-section of a language. Yet the study of syntactic universals customarily presupposes sets of fixed, discrete organic structures which may be compared, in other words, sets of static synchronic grammars.

The dilemma can best be circumvented by stressing the continually changing nature of "structure" and seeking to classify languages not so much as co-existing synchronic entities ("*systèmes ou tout se tient*") but as individual collections of sub-systems at different stages of grammaticalization and located at points along the sorts of historical trajectories which Traugott has proposed (e.g., 1982). Such a project involves considerable labor, with attention being paid to the typology of change (i.e., the nature of the trajectories themselves) as well as to the processes by which change is implemented in individual languages. It may then turn out that "typological shift," i.e., the supposed global restructuring of linguistic systems along universal lines, is an epiphenomenon which synchronically can at best only be vaguely characterized, and then only as a set of possible outcomes of general diachronic tendencies.

It follows that there is no alternative in typological studies to a careful language-by-language study of textual occurrences of word order (this same point is made by Brody 1984). Isolated and decontextualized sentences, even when supplied with a semantic template of the Prague school variety, as suggested in my Semantic Principle, have only a limited validity in typological studies. It is only from discourse that we can tell what is "new," what is "old," what is "contrastive," and so on; without textual analysis, the data base for a typology is suspect.

In this paper some typological aspects of verb position are discussed primarily with textual data from Malay. A comparison is made with earlier Germanic, but the study is limited in both the range of language

types discussed and the size of the sample. The basicness of verb position is insisted on despite Hawkins 1983, where the claim is made that syntactic typology should be grounded in adnominal groups (noun and adposition, noun and genitive). Verb position and verb morphology appear universally to form a crucial link between discourse function and clause structure, and are therefore a more realistic basis for a typology than the relatively trivial syntax of nominal groups.

## 2. Some Functional-Grammatical Preliminaries

Before proceeding with the diachronic-typological examination of Malay which forms the core of the paper, I will briefly discuss some of the grammatical concepts which underlie it.

### 2.1. Preferred Argument Structure

Syntactic investigations have usually proceeded from the study of random isolated sentences. Frequently, such sentences represent only a minority of the clauses and sentences which actually occur in discourse. The recent work of J. Du Bois (1985) shows that actual live discourse is made up of a small number of clause types, constructed with rather limited means. The most common of these, the "Preferred Argument Structure," consists of a verb with either zero or one lexical noun argument. The argument positions not represented by a lexical noun may, according to the individual language, be filled by atonic pronouns, clitics, or pronominal affixes, or by zero. The important point is that clauses with more than one lexical noun are considerably less common than clauses with only one lexical noun or no lexical nouns at all. In his investigations of spoken French, Lambrecht (1985, to appear) has also drawn attention to what he refers to as the "Preferred Clause Unit," consisting of a transitive verb with clitic pronouns and one or no lexical arguments.

DuBois notes that the one overt (i.e., lexical) argument in this preferred clause type is usually the verb's object; lexical transitive agents are relatively rare. Another favored role for lexical nouns is the "presented" (i.e., new) subject of an intransitive verb. It is, of course, no coincidence that these two discourse roles--transitive object and intransitive subject--repeatedly constitute a grammatical class, that of the Absolutive. Most significantly, too, in a majority of ergative languages the ergative/

absolutive case system is restricted to lexical nouns, while pronouns tend to follow nominative/accusative case marking.

### 2.2. VS/SV Alternating Languages

This term was coined by Myhill (1985) to refer to the widespread type of language whose basic word order cannot be said to be fixed as SVO or VSO, but alternates between the two under discourse conditions.

This alternation had already been studied for Spoken Hebrew by Givón (1975), and in Greenberg 1966 the existence of alternative orders in both Type I (VSO) and Type II (SVO) languages had been noted. Lehmann (1972, 1978) had noted the consequence that the position of the Subject was irrelevant to the typology, and indeed pointed out that the "Subject" was in general a dispensable element, leaving only the two basic types VO (combining Greenberg's Type I and Type II) and OV (Greenberg's Type III). Myhill's work points to a syntactic functional continuum within Lehmann's VO Type, the "VS/SV Alternation."

In view of the work of DuBois discussed above, it is evident that the alternation concerned is in fact one of preverbal versus postverbal lexical nouns, i.e., VN/NV, the N normally standing for the Absolutive NP. In order to maintain continuity with previous work on word order typology, however, the established terminology involving S,V, and O is here employed rather than the more accurate terminology, N,V. It should be noted, however, that (1) the natures of Subject and Object are problematical where ergative language are involved, and (2) S and O generally refer to lexical nouns and autonomous pronouns. (The notations VS and OV, however, conventionally refer to Verb-initial and Verb-final clauses respectively.)

### 2.3. Categoriality

The notion of CATEGORIALITY was developed in Hopper and Thompson 1984. According to this theory, the lexical categories NOUN and VERB are not *a priori* grammatically fixed, but are discourse-constituted instantiations of proto-typical functions. For verbs, this function is to report a new event of the discourse. To the degree that a linguistic form is carrying out that function, it will reflect the grammatical characteristics (morphological and syntactic) of a verb in that language. For nouns, the

prototypical discourse function is to identify a new participant of the discourse. Forms which carry out this function are predicted to be accompanied by whatever morphosyntax grammatically characterizes nouns.

### 2.4. Transitivity

TRANSITIVITY is understood here as a composite characteristic of a clause, only one component of which is that which figures in the traditionally accepted definition, namely the presence of an Object (the "valency" of the clause).

The theory of Transitivity and its associated discourse dimensions was presented and discussed in Hopper and Thompson 1980. The following ten parameters which contribute cumulatively to the Transitivity of a clause were proposed:

1. Valency, presence of an agent and an object;
2. Kinesis, denoting an action or event;
3. Telic aspect, i.e., sense of a completed goal;
4. Punctuality, denoting a sudden action;
5. Volitionality, denoting a deliberate action;
6. Affirmation--an affirmative clause;
7. Modality--the clause is in the realis mode;
8. Agency--the agent is human or otherwise autonomous;
9. Object affectedness--the object is changed in some way;
10. Object individuation, i.e., definiteness-referentiality.

Transitivity interacts with Categoriality, the Preferred Argument Structure, and the VS/SV Alternation in similar ways across a number of languages. The one which will be considered in the greatest detail here is Malay; reference will also be made to Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia), a modern development of Malay.

### 3. Malay

In early 19th century Malay texts assumed to be fairly close to vernacular

Malay (specifically the Hikayat Abdullah [1848]), we find the following clause types:

#### 3.1. Clause Types

The most important clause types in Malay are here given. The particle *-lah* is a discourse particle denoting, roughly, "event". The gloss PASSIVE, or PASS., is suggested without prejudice as to whether the form is actually Passive or in fact Ergative in a particular instance.

##### 3.1.1. Preferred Clause Structure

(i) Clitic V Clusters:

di-ambil-nya-lah <PASSIVE>-tr.verb-3p.AGENT-LAH  
"he took (it)"

ku-ambil-lah 1p.AGENT-tr.verb-LAH  
"I took (it)"

(ii) V~Noun:

datang-lah sa-orang nakhoda intr.verb-LAH AGENT  
"a sea-captain came"

ku-unjukkan satu rupiah 1p.AGT-tr.verb PATIENT  
"I handed over one rupee"

##### 3.1.2. Clauses with Lexical Agent and Patient

ERGATIVE:

di-ambil/oleh pawang itu/sadikit batang pisang  
PASS.-tr.verb AGENT PATIENT  
"the elephant-magician(2)/took(1)/a bit of banana stalk(3)"

ACTIVE:

monyet/men-dapat/bunga AGENT ME-tr.verb PATIENT  
"a monkey/gets hold of/a flower"

## PASSIVE:

aku/di-jualkan/oleh ibu-ku    PATIENT^PASSIVE-tr.verb^AGENT  
 "I/was sold/by my mother"

Almost invariably, in Malay these basic clauses are preceded by a conjunction and, usually, an adverbial of some kind, such as an expression of time or place. By far the commonest of these is *maka*, translatable as "and" or "then."

The clause types which contain a lexical patient are classified along the following lines (Hopper 1983):

1. ERGATIVE: The Verb has passive morphology, and the patient follows the verb, i.e., the clause is VN.
2. PASSIVE: The Verb has passive morphology, and the patient precedes the verb, i.e., the clause is NV.
3. ACTIVE: The Verb has an active prefix such as *meng-* or *ber-*, the patient follows the verb; this type of clause usually has a lexical or autonomous-pronoun agent, which precedes the verb, and the word order is therefore NV/(N).

The passive morphology is illustrated in the examples above. It consists in the prefixation of *di-* (glossed as "PASS") to the verb stem if the agent is understood to be 3rd person, and the prefixation of the clitic form of the pronoun if the agent is 1st or 2nd person. The third person agent has the preposition *oleh* if a lexical noun, and is enclitic *-nya* on the verb if non-lexical. Ergative and Passive thus share a similar morphology, and Active and Passive share a similar word order. (Even so, Passive and Ergative differ in more than simply word order; for example, the Passive, but not the Ergative, may lack an indication of the agent.)

The discourse functions of these various transitive constructions have been discussed in Hopper 1979a, 1983: the Ergative serves to "foreground" events, especially perfective, sequential ones, while the Passive and the Active are "backgrounding" constructions, functioning to hold up the action in order to describe things, states, or repeated and on-going occurrences. The Active in particular has functional affinities with the construction known as Anti-Passive in a number of ergative languages, as

has recently been shown by Polinskaya (1984). In Hopper 1978 [1977], and 1979a a close functional correlation was described between the focus structure of clauses and event structure in the discourse, such that the pragmatic sequencing of events universally implicated an identity of agent across the sequenced clauses and new information in the predicate, while in backgrounding newly introduced information was more likely to appear in the topic/subject. This distribution is of course compatible with the division of labor between the Ergative on the one hand and the Passive and Active on the other. It has important consequences for the link between Ergativity, Verb Categoricity, Transitivity, and Preferred Argument Structure to be discussed below.

### 3.2. Typological Shift in Malay

In the early 19th century language, the situation in Malay is generally as outlined here. The Ergative narrates sequential events with a high degree of topic continuity (Hopper 1978 [1977]), while Actives and Passives supply explanatory material:

maka sa-bentar sa-bentar di-ambil-nya  
 and from time to time PASS take AGT.

surat itu, di-renong-nya, kemudian  
 letter the PASS.stare-at-AGT. then

di-letakkan-nya, demikian-lah laku-nya.  
 PASS.put:down AGT. such LAH behavior his

Maka sa-hari-hari adat-nya ia berkereta pada petang-petang;  
 and daily habit his he go:driving on afternoon

maka pada hari itu sampai malam kereta menanti di-pintu, tiada ia  
 and on day that until evening carriage MF:remain at door not he  
 mau turun dari rumah-nya....  
 want go:down from house his

and this was his behavior: every now and then he took the letter, stared at it, and then put it down again. It was his custom to go for a drive every day in the afternoon; but on

that day his carriage remained at the gate, and he did not leave his house (A 86)

In this passage, which is quite typical of narration at this period, pre-verbal lexical nouns (e.g., *kereta* 'carriage') and autonomous pronouns (*ia* 'he') are found in clauses which do not actually continue the action, but which explain, describe, contrast, justify, etc. the actual reported events.

Later in the 19th century, the discourse-functional distinctions among the three constructions can be seen to be breaking down. Rafferty (1985) shows that statistically during this period, and into the 20th century, transitive clauses regardless of their discourse status tend increasingly to be formulated in the Active, i.e., with SVO word order and the Active prefix *men-* if this is possible. This encroachment is largely at the expense of the Ergative, which at least in the written language becomes an archaism. Since the Ergative was the more highly Transitive construction, in the composite sense discussed above, the trend may be characterized as one in which the Active increases in Transitivity, and the language as a whole becomes increasingly SVO and decreasingly VSO, though there is of course no point at which the transition may be said to have been completed.

One manifestation of this trend toward SVO syntax is the development of copular and possessive verbs. In the spoken Malay vernacular, copular clauses are generally expressed without an explicit verb equivalent to 'to be', and possession is indicated either by the existential *ada* 'there is/are' or by the form *punya*. This *punya* derives from *empunya* 'its owner', and the original syntax was (and often still is) of the form *rumah ini saya punya* 'this house I [am] its-owner', requiring the possessed object to be a definite topic. Nowadays, *punya* has long been reanalyzed as a verb: *saya punya rumah* 'I have a house'.

Purists usually dismiss this usage as "Bazaar Malay" (i.e., Europeanized), and likewise the use of *punya* as a genitive case *saya punya rumah* 'my house' (with its Genitive-Noun word order). In the written language, however, *punya* is now decked out with full verbal trappings: *mem-punya-i* (where *-i* is a low-grade transitivity suffix): *Saya mempunyai rumah* 'I have a house'. Also characteristic of the written language is the development of what was originally a resumptive pronoun

*ia-lah* as a copula and the use of the verb *menjadi* 'become' as the exact equivalent of Western-style 'to be'; cf. Hopper 1972:129-140. The development of such copular and possessive verbs has the effect of increasing the text frequency of SVO sentences.

### 3.3. Morphological Correlates of the VS-to-SV Shift?

Ergativity is correlated with basic word order in that apparently only VS and OV languages (Greenberg's Type I and Type III) may be ergative. We might therefore expect that when word order shifts from VS to SV, a concomitant shift from ergativity to accusativity will also begin to manifest itself.

It is unfortunate that Ergativity has until quite recently rarely been studied from a discourse perspective. There are many facts in individual ergative languages which suggest that discourse-based investigation would be rewarding. In Abkhaz, for example, certain of the subject prefixes on the verb are dropped if the subject immediately precedes the verb (Deeters 1963:58-9; Boeder 1979:474). This evidently involves loss of overt indicators of ergativity when the verb is moved out of its clause-final position into the post-subject position—a curious parallel to the Malay situation presented here. Unfortunately, neither of the sources for Abkhaz just mentioned supplies the all-important discourse data which might explain it. There is a need for greater attention to trans-sentential approaches to the phenomenon of ergativity; cf. Hopper 1979b.

It seems to me, too, that by listing morphological paradigms of the "ergative inflection" in such-and-such language, we predispose ourselves to thinking of ergativity as a grammatical given, an "a priori" fact about a certain language, rather than as a possibility for arranging arguments called for by discourse. In this regard, the current and forthcoming work of Du Bois is to be viewed as a very significant advance in our understanding both of ergativity and of the nature of "grammar" in general.

### 3.4. Categoriality and Typological Shift

It was noted above in the section on Categoriality that linguistic forms which fall away from their prototypical functions will tend to lack morphosyntactic markings characteristic of the two prime categories.

One of the commonest marks of the Active verb is the prefix *meng-* (which has several allomorphs; in the citations below it is glossed as ME). There are some indications that in the earlier texts, the verb with this prefix, which almost invariably is preceded by its subject, is in some sense "less of" a verb than the Ergative *di-*form (whose order is, of course, VSO). Verbs which carry the prefix *meng-* often have the same distribution as nouns, i.e., are nominalized verbs; they may be objects, subject/topics, etc., and may have the demonstrative *itu*:

Sa-bermula	makaada-lah	kira-kira	delapan	sembilan	bulan
now	and	it:was	about	eight	nine
				months	months
aku	bertekun	mengaji	dan	menulis	itu....
I	occupied	ME:study	and	ME:write	the
			and	it:was	time
tengah	hari	lepas-lepas	mengaji	itu...	
mid	day	after	ME:study	the	

Now it happened that for about eight or nine months I was occupied with studying and writing. . . And at about midday, after studying was over. . . (20)

In a recent article (Myhill 1985), John Myhill has shown that among languages which display the alternation of VS/SV, it is possible to show that languages which are "truly" VS, i.e., Greenberg's Type I language, require that if a noun is placed in front of the verb (in other words, if the clause has the structure SV), the verb will appear in a nominalized form. Languages which shift their typological structure from VS to SV undergo a progressive "verbalization" of the verb in SV clauses, that is, the morphology of the verb changes from a nominal to a verbal one.

Myhill's work can be interpreted in terms of the Categoricity Hypothesis (Hopper and Thompson 1984) to point to the conclusion that as a language moves from VS and increasingly accepts SV as an unmarked word order, we can expect to find:

(1) that SV clauses INCREASE IN TRANSITIVITY.

This increase may involve a loss of constraints against transitive morphology in SV clauses, or a loss of transitive morphology peculiar to VS clauses. Either of these developments would, of course, have the effect of increasing the average transitivity of SV clauses.

(2) that the V in SV clauses INCREASES IN VERB CATEGORICALITY.

The increase in verb categoricity in SV clauses may similarly result from a loss of constraints against typically verbal morphology in SV clauses, or from the decay of verbal morphology peculiar to VS clauses.

Myhill's work suggests that there are indeed generalizations which can be made about SV as opposed to VS languages, although they are of a more subtle nature than gross observations about word order alone, since they involve also questions of pragmatics and morphology. It is perhaps premature to dismiss the verb-based typology in general, and the VS/SV (Greenberg's Type I/ Type II) distinction in particular.

**3.5. Reporting and Predication**

One way in which the difference between VS and SV clauses in Malay might be characterized is to say that SV clauses make predications, whereas VS clauses report or narrate.

Viewed in this way, the Active, in which a lexical agent precedes the verb, and the Passive, in which a lexical patient precedes the verb, would be noun-oriented, or topic-oriented, while the Ergative, with its Preferred Argument Structure and its affinity for foregrounding, would be event-oriented; see Hopper 1983. This discourse functional distinction is quite well preserved in the early 19th century texts, but breaks down in the later period.

The distinctions of clause types, and ultimately the morphological distinctions also among Active, Passive, and Ergative, depend on what must have been a subtle distinction between "reporting," or "narrating," an event, and "describing" an action. It is essentially the same distinction analyzed by Weinrich in his book *Tempus: besprochene und erzählte Welt* (Weinrich 1964). Distinctions of this kind, which depend on a richness of shared context which is difficult to achieve across ethnic and cultural boundaries, are extremely vulnerable to subversion through the sort of external domination which increased in Southeast Asia during the 19th century (and which Abdullah himself documents).

#### 4. Germanic

Germanic provides an instructive parallel to Malay both in regard to the discourse functions of the VS/SV alternation and the change from a period of alternation to one of highly grammaticized SVO syntax. (This discussion is based on Hopper 1975 [1967], in which earlier research on this topic is also described, and on Hopper 1979a.)

In Old Norse the alternation of SV and VS displays close functional parallels to Malay: Lively narration, foregrounding, implicates VS, backgrounding--both local and global--is accomplished strictly with SV; these are Heusler's *bewegte Stellung* and *Ruhestellung* respectively (Heusler 1921:173-182). Essentially, as Heusler shows, these are for Old Norse the only possible word orders.

In Old English a wider variety of word orders is available, and the general picture is less similar to Malay, largely because the earliest Old English prose documents antedate the earliest Norse monuments by several centuries; we find English therefore at an earlier stage than Norse. In the oldest narrative prose, for example the early parts of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, verb-final clauses are common, and a discourse-functional alternation between all three clause types can be discerned (Hopper 1979a:220-226):

1. SV syntax is typical of backgrounding.
2. VS (in prose the verb is invariably preceded by a particle or adverb) is typical of the initial event in an episodic series, usually sharing the same topic. VS correlates very strongly with a change of topic, and therefore can be said to initiate a topic-chain.
3. OV is "interior," being found with both episode-internal events and subordinate clauses. The OV type of clause in Old English displays a number of parallels to the Malay Ergative (Preferred) clause type, including the phenomenon of clitic-clustering at the beginning of the clause, and an affinity for transitivity.

The later history of English syntax is dominated by the spread of the verb-medial (SVO) type at the expense of the other two types, and its eventual grammaticization in the modern language, which is already evident in the Middle English period (cf. Fries 1940).

The same trend can be seen in Old English as in Malay: SV clauses occur with increasing indifference to the original distinction in grounding and transitivity. That SV clauses were originally lower in Transitivity is suggested by the following statistic (Hopper 1979a:225). In the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, a selection of typically durative verbs (such as "remained") were found to occur 85% of the time in SV clauses, while a selection of typically punctual verbs (such as "slew") occurred only 41.4% of the time in SV clauses, being found otherwise in VS or OV clauses. This distribution is symptomatic of lower Transitivity in the composite sense for the SV clause type.

English appears to be the only Germanic language to have undergone grammaticization of SV word order in all clause types. The other languages have either retained the VS/SV alternation (Icelandic), or have modified it with a verb-second constraint (German, Danish). Standard German, of course, has moreover grammaticized verb-final syntax in subordinate clauses, thus codifying an old tendency in Germanic as a whole.

#### 5. General Discussion

I will conclude by offering some speculative conclusions based on what is admittedly at this stage rather limited evidence.

The change in the direction of grammaticized SVO word order can occur through a replacement of a highly Transitive VS clause type by an originally less Transitive SV clause type if the two clause types are distinct morphologically as well as syntactically. This has occurred in Indonesian.

In languages in which the different clause types are distinct solely through word order, and not through a concomitant morphological difference, it may also occur through a progressive fronting of various types of NP without morphological replacement.

Both of these "strategies" for fixing SVO word order have the effect of producing a gradual textual preponderance of SVO word orders, which may be reinforced through the introduction of copular and possessive-verb constructions. The older word orders are either eliminated, as was OV in English, or reserved for specific speech acts such as questions and commands.



It is important in the evaluation of typological shift in verb-position not to assume any inherent "teleological" direction, no matter how complex and subtle the conditioning factors might be. No principle dictates that word order will change, e.g., from SV/VS to SVO. To the contrary: the VS/SV continuum appears to be capable of existing over long periods of time in perpetual flux, with only slight but not necessarily consistent movement toward stabilization in either direction. Where SV stabilization occurs, it can very often be seen to be the result of language contact and creolization. It is likely that this is precisely what has happened in Malay/Indonesian and English.

One can even envisage the sorts of social factors which might be conducive to such a development. The nature of contact between (for example) the Norman French ruling class and the Anglo-Saxon serfs, or Dutch colonial overseers and subject societies in Indonesia, involved a certain social discontinuity, even alienation, and an unpredictability with respect to the content of communication. There is, in other words, a break-down of the intersubjectivity characteristic of a homogeneous, traditionally stratified society. In an extreme it is probably no exaggeration to say that a radically different conception of "language" is involved from the situation in which speakers who mutually inhabit the same language are vocally socializing. Certainly a sharply different kind of hierarchy is present. The change involved may be seen as one between an expressive and a referential use of language; but of course, as Bakhtin showed, the "referential" use of language is itself a hegemonizing one (see White 1984).

This greater unpredictability would surely have manifested itself linguistically in a higher proportion of new-information lexical nouns (explicit meaning-bearing morphemes), shorter and more peremptory utterances, and a considerably greater explicitness and decreased reliance on context in general. In my discussion of Malay above, I have tried to show how SV word order types (Active and Passive) are more nominal (predicative, identificational), while the VS type (the ergative or Preferred Clause Unit) is more verbal (reportorial)--reference to participants being carried on with clitics and even zero anaphora, but not with full lexical

nouns. In the situation of social discontinuity which I have described above, the language is broken down, and its (holo-)phrasal nature (the Preferred Clause Unit, with its intrinsic affinity for ergativity but also other ready-made components of discourse, such as formulas and proverbs) replaced by a more analytic structure in which Verbs and Verb Phrases become predicative of Noun topic/subjects. The language in a very real way comes to symbolize the social disruption caused by the external forces at work on it.

The influence of written languages should also be considered an important factor. Written language permits more flexibility in the "cracking" of participants (hence a slackening of the rigid anaphoric conventions necessary in the spoken language for marking continuity or discontinuity of topic), and also a greater degree of abstraction, both of which are conducive to changes in topic and an increased use of lexical nouns. In this sense also the shift toward SVO structure may reflect an increasingly logocentric ontology.

Even with contact-induced change, however, we should not assume that the syntactic changes will be abrupt. On the contrary, there will usually be no apparent textual discontinuity, but rather we should expect to find a gradual, and perhaps grudging, extension of SVO syntax from pre-verbal lexical noun to tonic pronoun and eventually perhaps to a re-ordering such that enclitics become proclitics, (probably through cliticization of the older autonomous pronouns), precisely to the degree that the new social order is accepted by the expanded--though precariously balanced--language community. To a large extent this shift will reflect an already-present possibility in the language. Thus the "creolization" theory of the development of English is often (wrongly, I believe) rejected on the grounds that the same changes noted in the post-Conquest era have predecessors in the pre-Conquest period.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have suggested that a word order class should be investigated in which the clause-initial verb is in a discourse functional alternation with a noun-verb type of clause, that is, a VS/SV alternation.

Languages of this type lend themselves to a number of important grammatical and diachronic generalizations:

1. The VS clause is more dynamic and foregrounded, while the SV clause is backgrounded.
2. The VS clause is shown to be higher in Transitivity in the compound sense defined by Hopper and Thompson (1980), and the SV clause is correspondingly lower in Transitivity.
3. The VS clause, moreover, reflects the Preferred Argument Structure in the sense of Du Bois, and is structurally holophrastic, while the SV clause is articulated, being bi- or multi-parite in structure (e.g., subject-predicate).
4. The VS clause is continuous with respect to the discourse topic. The SV clause, on the other hand, is discontinuous with respect to the discourse topic.
5. There may be morphological concomitants of the two clause types. If so, and the two clauses are differentiated by ergative vs. accusative grammatical structure, the VS type will always be ergative and the SV type accusative, never the other way round.
6. If the verb morphology reflects more verb-like as opposed to more noun-like features (Myhill 1985), these features will be distributed in such a way that the verb in the VS type will show the verb-like features and the verb in the SV type the noun-like features. The discourse-functional correlates of this distribution will be as predicted in the Categoriality Principle of Hopper and Thompson (1984).
7. Speculatively: Although not intrinsically unstable diachronically, this type of language may show a "drift" toward stable SVO word order. Such a drift is (always? often?) a result of creolization.