SYNTACTIC CHANGE

Problem:

In syntax there does not exist a finite set of sentences occurring in a finite set of discourses that might serve as the basis for establishing syntactic correspondences.

In syntax, only patterns can be compared, and patterns do not evolve the way sounds do. There is no one-to-one correspondence between the syntactic patterns of a language and the syntactic patterns of that language at some earlier point in history.

Sentences are frequently modified, for example, placing objects at the beginning of the sentence for emphasis, see the next sentence: *Sentences, we often modify for emphasis of the displaced item*.

As a result of the multiple possibilities in syntax, linguists found it difficult to recognize basic structures of syntax.

The comparative method is applied to abstract features (i.e., phonemes, when examining sound change). Similarly, the comparative method should apply to abstract structures in syntax, (i.e., syntactic patterns such the order of in Genitive Constructions or, Relative Constructions to their antecedents (Rel Cl + Ant.).

Previous research:

> 19th century scholars:
> Henry Weil: he compared Latin syntax with Turkish, recognizing that Latin was an OV language;
>
> Berthold Delbrück: based on his analysis of Vedic patterns, he provided evidence that OV was the "traditional order" in IE.
>
> Early 20th century:
> George Small: two monographs on comparative constructions in the early Gmc. dialects. He found the order:
>
> > *sta:ne heardran*   "stronger than stone"
>
> The same order was found in Old Icelandic:

<div align="center">

Hon var hverri *konu friðari* "She was more beautiful than any
other woman".

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The results of these early studies were not coordinated – while important, they did not lead to a concise method to study diachronic syntax.

The basic problems in transferring the comparative method from phonology/morphology to syntax are:

- In the comparison of sounds, different forms yield unique reconstructions; in syntax there exists no correspondence (=pattern) that is not a correspondence of identity. Reconstruction is not possible until the cognate language can be shown to have had patterns of syntactic structures that are essentially identical.

- Related languages may show corresponding patterns in the same syntactic category, but the lexical material incorporated in that pattern is not a cognate.

    For example: Skt. and Hittite have the auxiliary + nonfinite verb form, but the auxiliaries are not cognates.

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Skt. *k̆r* 'to do'   vs. Hittite *hark-* 'to hold'

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Do we reconstruct the pattern for the parent language without forms to fill the slots, or do we disregard the pattern correspondence and assume parallel development?

For both Skt. and Hittite there are texts available; these show that the Skt. development is a relatively late innovation. *However, evidence of this quality is seldom available*!

- An even worse situation arises when related languages share syntactic categories without cognate lexical material or corresponding syntactic patterns in the formal expression of that category.

For example: IE passive constructions → there exist almost as many formal devices for the expression of the passive as there are IE dialects. So, if no formal comparisons are possible, will we fail to reconstruct for PIE a grammatical category that has expressions in almost all descendant languages?

- What do the comparatists do when related languages have patterns that defy correspondence?

Example: Hittite is SOV, Germanic is SVO, and Celtic is VSO. What do we do with this information?

In sound change, different reflexes (e.g., Hittite *p*, Gmc *f* and Celtic $\emptyset$) yield some proto-phoneme. But the divergent patterns (SOV, SVO and VSO) yield nothing. In such cases internal reconstructions should be used.

Assumption: if most daughter languages in a family agree with respect to word-order of certain phrase types, we may reconstruct that for the protolanguage. In cases where identical patterns do not occur, we may assume that innovations may have taken place.

It must be emphasized that word-order theories are based on statistically established tendencies and that they are not without exceptions.

Procedure: we use the method of internal reconstruction first in order to identify language-specific developments. The divergent grammatical patterns must be brought into line before any reconstruction can be offered.

OE: because it had an extensive system of case marking, more variable word order was possible than in ME.
Explain!

OE   S   O   V
             She   him   advised

             V   S   O
        Then   sent   the   king   the dish

NOTE: changes are slower in syntax than in phonology and morphology; there are numerous residues of older constructions together with current patterns (in particular in literary forms).
Example: *mind you*
                hear ye
                 etc.

The older order is retained here (pronoun after the verb).

Pronouns may maintain older constructions: in Latin we may find postpositional use of *cum* 'with' *me:cum* 'with me' *se:cum* 'with (him) self'

Residues of OV patterning: locations of postpositions!

        ac ðis … we willa *her æfter areccean* "but this…we will relate hereafter"

        herein, hereafter

Processes in the shift of relative clause constructions:
Hittite texts from the 18th to the 12th century BC provide material from understanding the shift from OV relative constructions to VO relative constructions. Early Latin texts: OV relative constructions.

In Old Hittite a particle was attached to the noun, topicalizing them much as relative clauses do:

> kuis   sagais   kisari ta   LUGALI …tarueni
>
> which sign   appears it   to-king   we report
>
> "We report to the king whichever sigh appears" (i.e., We report the sign that appears to the king").
>
> In the example the relative noun is topicalized by an element that later became the relative pronoun, placed after the relative noun: "the book that".

> *Thus, the relative clause pattern may shift from an*
> *original OV structure to VO structure.*

> As languages become VO, relative clauses come to be placed after the main clause. The topicalizing pronominal item becomes a relative marker.
>
> Note: the relative marker may be omitted in English, German, etc. just like it was omitted in early Hittite: *This is the house he bought.*

Greenberg's syntactic universals help to interpret residues of older patterning:

> i.   if verbs precede objects, as in a VO language, then adpositions (prepositions) will precede nouns, and in comparisons the adjectives will precede standards;
> ii.   if verbs follow the objects that they govern, as in OV languages, the other constructions will be parallel.

Changes from OV to VO pattern:

- genitive constructions modify,
- objects were placed after the verb,
- prepositions were introduced,
  etc.

The change from OV to VO is not restricted to English; the same change is evident in completely unrelated languages, such as the Bantu languages.

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What are the causes of the OV to VO change? Possible explanations:

- adoption of a language by non-native speakers,
- bilingual or multilingual speakers.

        Study 8.4-8.5, pp. 153-154,
               8.8, p. 154,
               8.12-8.15, pp. 156-158.