Indo-European Syntax Examples

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1 Scrambling

I honestly laugh whenever I hear someone describe German as a 'scrambling' language. Early Indo-European languages scrambled things, *all* things, not just topicalized phrases, but heads of constituents, clitics, adpositions, *everything*. Look at this data and weep to your pitiful constituency gods.

(1) Quis   multā   gracilis tē   puer in rōsā   perfūsus   liquidīs   urget odoribus
    who.M.S many.ABL.F gracile thee boy in rose.ABL.F.S infused.N.M.S liquids.ABL.M urges smells.ABL.M
    grātō   Pyrrha sub   antrō?
    pleasant.ABL.N Pyrrha under cave.ABL.N

    'What gracile boy infused of liquid odors courts you with so many roses in a pleasant cave, Pyrrha?'

What you might otherwise expect to be the Latin word order:
Quis [puer gracilis [perfūsus [odoribus liquidīs]]] tē [in [rōsā multā]] [sub [antrō grātō]] urget, Pyrrha?

What we actually get:
Quis multā gracilis tē puer in rōsā perfūsus liquidīs urget odoribus grātō Pyrrha sub antrō?

(2) Arma   virum-que cano, Troiae qui   primus ab   oris   Italiam, fato   profugus, Laviniaque
    arms.Pl.A man.A-and sing.1S Troy.G who.M.S first.M.S from shore.G Italy.A fate.ABL refugee.N.S Lavinian-and
    venit litora, multum ille et   terris   iactatus et alto   vi   superum   saevae   memorem
    comes shores many.S he and lands.ABL hurled.N and great.S.ABL power.ABL above.M.A savage.F.S.G mindful.A
    Iunonis ob iram.
    Juno.G by anger.F.ABL

    'I sing of arms and the man, he who, exiled by fate, first came from the coast of Troy to Italy, and to Lavinian shores, hurled about endlessly by land and sea, by the will of the gods, by cruel Juno's remorseless anger.'

(3) ahyā   yāsā   nəmanghā   ustāna-zastō rafədhrahyā mainyōuš mazdā   paourvīm spəntahyā ašā
    him.G entreat.1S reverence.INS uplift-hand.N support.G   spirit.G Mazda.V first   holy.G   truth.INS
    vīspəng šyaoθanā vanghōuš xratūm   managhō yā   xšnəvīša   gōuš-ca   urvanəm.
    all.Pl.A act.INS good.G   determination.A mind.G REL.INS satisfy.2.S.SUB cow.G-and soul.A

    'With outspread hands in petition for that help, O Mazda, I will pray for the works of the holy spirit, O thou the Right, whereby I may please the will of Good Thought and the Ox-Soul.'

2 Early adpositions

'Prepositions' as particles:

Homeric Greek:

(4) theoí d-**epi**   mártyroi éstōn
    gods thus-upon witnesses be.SUBJ

    'Let the gods be witnessess thereupon'

(5) **en** d-etíthei   mélitos... amphiphorēas
    in thus-placed honey   amphoras

    'And thereon he sat two-handled jars of honey'

Stranded 'prepositions':

(6) **amphí** dé cheíra   phílēn   bálen **éngchei**
     around thus hand.ACC dear.ACC threw lance.DAT

     'He threw his (dear) hand around the lance'

Duplicate 'prepositions'!

(7) **en** d-yperas   te kalus   te podas t' **en**-edēsen   **en** autē
     in thus-braces and halyards and sheets and in-made.fast in it

     'And he made fast in it (the raft) braces and halyards and sheets'

(8) **en** d-oinon   echeuen / **en** depai   chryseō,   kai min   pros mython   eeipen
     in thus-wine.ACC poured / en cup.DAT golden.DAT and him.ACC to   story.ACC said

     'He poured wine in a cup of golden, and said to him'

'Prepositions' as severable verbal particles:

(9) **Abhí** yó   mahinā dívam mitró **babhūva** sapráthāḥ
     over   PART X   heaven Mitra

     Mitra the renowned who is superior to heaven by his greatness'

3   Second position everything

See the *d(e)* in all Greek sentences above. Also Latin:

(10) Tū   autem in nervō   iam iacēbis
     thou however in custody now will.lie

     'But you will soon be lying in custody'

(11) DUMU-ŠU=ma=wa=šši=za=kan
     son-AGR=ma=thus=him.D=himself=kan

     'but his son himself to him. . . '

Second position AUX to SVO

From Hock's *Principles of Historical Linguistics.*
Early Runic Germanic SOV:

(12) flagda   faikinaz ist
     evil.spirit menaced is

     'He is menaced by evil spirits'

(13) thrawijan haitinaz was
     throes   destined was

     'He was destined for the throes'

Early English, SOV with 2nd position clitic AUXes:

(14) ni s solu   sot, ni s Akse stAin skorin
     not is by.sun hit, not is axe   stone cut

     '(It) is not hit by the sun, the stone is not cut with an axe'

(15) Bēowulfe   weardh gūdhhrēdh gyfethe
     Beowulf.D was   battle.glory given

     'To Beowulf was the glory in battle given'

<div align="center">Eventually, V2 was generalized to all verbs:</div>

(16) wē witan igland hēr be ēaston

'We know another island east of here'

<div align="center">And eventually, SVO was interpreted as the default order of English, even with subordinated clauses:</div>

(17) Dryhten waes sprecende dhās word tō Moyse
      lord   was speaking   these words to Moses

'The Lord was speaking these words to Moses'

Similar changes are attestable in Slavic and Romance languages. Additionally, the fact that Romance languages have preverbal clitics is a fact of the Wackernagalian tendencies of both verbs and clitics in the languages. Nowadays, however, only several dialects of Romance (mostly those heavily influenced by Germanic languages in Switzerland) maintain V2, but all other Romance languages maintain the verbal cliticization of pronouns.

4 Filling up specifiers of CP/PP

<div align="center">Latin:</div>

(18) summā$_i$ cum laude t_i
      highest.F.ABL$_i$ with praise.ABL t_i

'with highest praise'

(19) fēstō diē sī quid prodēgeris...
      holiday   if some splurge.2S.SUB

'If you splurge a bit on a holiday...'

(20) [perfida et peculātus   ex   urbe et   avāritia] sī exulant...
      [betrayal and embezzlement from city and greed]   if exile.3.P

'If betyrayal and embezzlement and greed are exiled from the city...'

<div align="center">English:</div>

(21)   Intelligent though you are, you failed to see this.

(22)   % I'm going to Louisiana, [my true love]$_i$ for to see t_i.

5 Absolute constructions

Absolutive constructions are one of the most marked aspects of Indo-European syntax. Nearly all language families attest a kind of clausal subordination when non-finite (verbless or participial) words take a particular oblique case and

(23) [All the group assembled], we began our trek to the convenience store.

(24) Tōn   andrōn polemuntōn, ai gynaikes monai oikoi   eisin.
      the.G men.G fighting.G   the women   alone home.D were

'While the men were fighting, the women are at home by themselves'

(25) apām   taptānām pheno jāyate
      water.G heated.G foam.N be.born

'When water is heated, foam arises'

(26) expugnatis oppidis Caesar statuit...
      taken.ABL towns.ABL Caesar decided

'Once several towns had been taken, Caesar decided...'

<div align="center">Two interpretations: descriptive vs. precondition. See the second amendment.</div>

(27) A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.

6 Impersonals (tbc)