

# Word Order

# BASIC WORD ORDER

Standard way how words are arranged **in a sentence: SUBJECT + PREDICATE**

Vital importance in English (when compared to e.g. Slavic languages)

- hence: very **STRICT**
- absence of **CASES**

Compare:

*“The chicken crossed the road”*

*vs*

*“The road crossed the chicken”*

*„Četl jsem tu knihu“*

*vs*

*„Tu knihu jsem četl“*

- Deviations from the basic word order usually have **REASON** (emotion, stress)
- can impact the meaning of what you're trying to say

**Set phrases** that carry special meaning ... „black and white“ ... **NOT:** „white and black“

# BASIC WORD ORDER

*Superordinate clause*

*Subordinate clause*

**S A V<sub>trans</sub> O S V<sub>intrans</sub>**

[I quickly shut the door [*before* the animal could escape.]]

## Clause types

Mary	is	in the house.
Mary	is	a nurse / kind.
Paul	caught	the ball.
I	put	the plate on the table.
We	have proved	him wrong/a fool.
She	gives	me expensive presents.
The child	laughed.	

## **TASK:**

***Write down the clause patterns of these sentences (S-V-? ..)***

# WORD ORDER OF OBJECTS

**O<sub>i</sub> O<sub>d</sub>** They showed *him* *their secret*.

(? They showed *him* *it*. - some dialects)

**O<sub>d</sub> O<sub>i</sub>** They showed *their secret* **to him** (*not to her*).

They showed *it to him*.

**O S V** *Poetry* he likes, but *thrillers* he hates.

*This book*, I, 've never read!

*This relation of signified to signifier* Saussure calls a linguistic sign.

**O V S** *Out of swá-hwá-svá'* has developed our 'who'.

# WORD ORDER OF ADVERBIALS

- **Manner - Place - Time**

He was driving [*dangerously*] [*through the park*] [*yesterday*].  
(*Yesterday, he was driving dangerously through the park.*)

- **Place: Smaller place — Larger Place**

He spent a lot of time *in Wenceslaus Square in Prague*.  
(in Czech: ... *v Praze na Václavském náměstí.*)

- **Time: Shorter period — Longer period**

See you [*at nine*] [*on Monday*].  
(in Czech: *Sejdeme se v pondělí v devět.*)

**but:** See you *on Monday at NINE*. (i.e. Not at ten.)

# UNMARKED AND MARKED WORD ORDER

- The functional analysis of a sentence (clause) distinguishes:
  - what is being talked about - **the theme** (point of departure)
  - what is being said about it - **the rheme** (core of the message)
- In Czech, the neutral, unmarked word order presupposes that:
  - T precedes R.
  - R-T sequence renders the word order emotional, marked.
  - **Četl** jsem tu knihu. (R - T)      (the intonation centre on **četl**) **marked**
- In English, the neutral, unmarked word order presupposes the grammatical sequence S-V. The deviation from this sequence renders the word order marked.
  - I've **read** the book.      (S-V-O) = **unmarked**
  - The book, I've **read**.      (O-S-V) = **marked**
  - She loves **Mark**.      /      **Mark** is who she loves.

# POETIC/MARKED WORD ORDER

- In some contexts, **for dramatic effect**, the conventional word order is reversed; instead of the unmarked sequence of clause elements (S-V-O-A) a different type of sequence is employed:
  - it starts with a presentation of a scene,
  - that is followed by verbal form describing the act of appearing or the state of existence on that scene, and
  - ends with a reference to the phenomenon (i.e. the logical subject)
- **[Scene] – [Appearance/Existence] – [Phenomenon]**  
[In the middle of the room]    [was]    [*a table*].  
[Around me]    [sits]    [*the night*].

# WORD ORDER TECHNIQUES (MARKED)

- FRONTING: to make the fronted element the focus of the sentence
  - ***Inside the house** Mr Summers found a family of cats shut in the bathroom.*
  - ***This** I do not understand.*
  - ***Whether Nancy was there or not**, she could not be certain.*
- INVERSION: full/operator verb placed before the subject element
  - *Best of all **would be** to get a job in Wellingham.*
  - *Not before in our history **have** so many strong influences **united** to produce so large a disaster.*
  - *Beside it was a wooden seat on which **sat** two men talking.*
- EXISTENTIAL THERE: to mark the state of existence or occurrence of something
  - ***There's** a bear sitting in the corner.*
- CLEFTING: splitting a clause in 2 parts, leaving each with its own verb
  - *It's a man I want.*