

Does SOV-order favor case marking?

An empirical testing of Greenberg's universal 41

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Structure

- Introduction
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Introduction

- Case marking: „system of marking dependent nouns for the type of relationship they bear to their head“ (Blake 2001: 1)
- Icelandic (Indo-European; Germanic):

Strák-ur sér hund-Ø.

Boy-NOM see.3SG.PRES dog-ACC

A boy sees a dog.

Strák-Ø sér hund-ur.

Boy-ACC see.3SG.PRES dog-NOM

A dog sees a boy.

Introduction

- Japanese (isolated), SOV-order:

John ga tegami o yon-da.

John SUBJ letter OBJ read-past

John read the letter.

(Dryer 2013a)

- Problem: What should be used? Basic or more frequent order?
- Example German: SOV or SVO?
- Word order: „either the only possible order or the most frequent order“ (Dryer 2013b)

Introduction

- Three ways to encode semantic roles:
 - Case marking (Russian; Indo-European, Slavic)
 - Word order (English; Indo-European, Germanic)
 - Verbal agreement (Oto-Manguan; Mexico)
- Trade-off between the use of case marking and word order (Sinnemäki 2008)
- Greenberg's universal 41: "If in a language the verb follows both the nominal subject and nominal object as the dominant order, the language almost always has a case system."
- Here: statistical testing of this correlation

Data

- WALS chapter 49: Number of cases
- WALS chapter 81: Order of Subject, Object and Verb
- 236 languages in merged set
- 22 languages with value “Exclusively borderline case marking” excluded

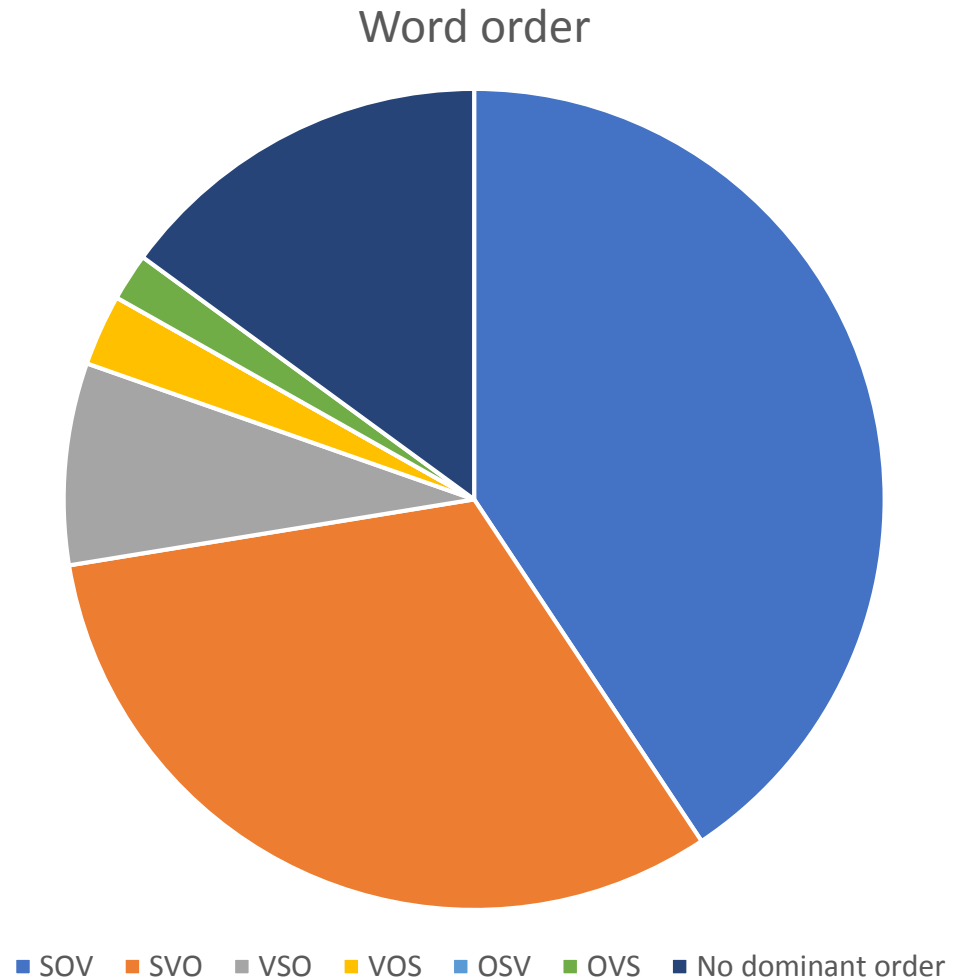
Data

- Reassignment of values from Chapter 49:
 - 1 – No case marking
 - 2 – 2 cases
 - 3 – 3 cases
 - 4 – 4 cases
 - 5 – 5 cases
 - 6 – 6 or 7 cases
 - 7 – 8 or 9 cases
 - 8 – 10 or more cases

Data



Data



SOV	87
SVO	68
VSO	17
VOS	6
OSV	0
OVS	4
No dominant order	32

Results

- No dominant order included

	Verb Final	Non-Verb Final	
Case	70	49	119
No Case	17	78	95
	87	127	214

- Critical value: 3.84
- $X^2=36.68$
- $p < .00001$

Results

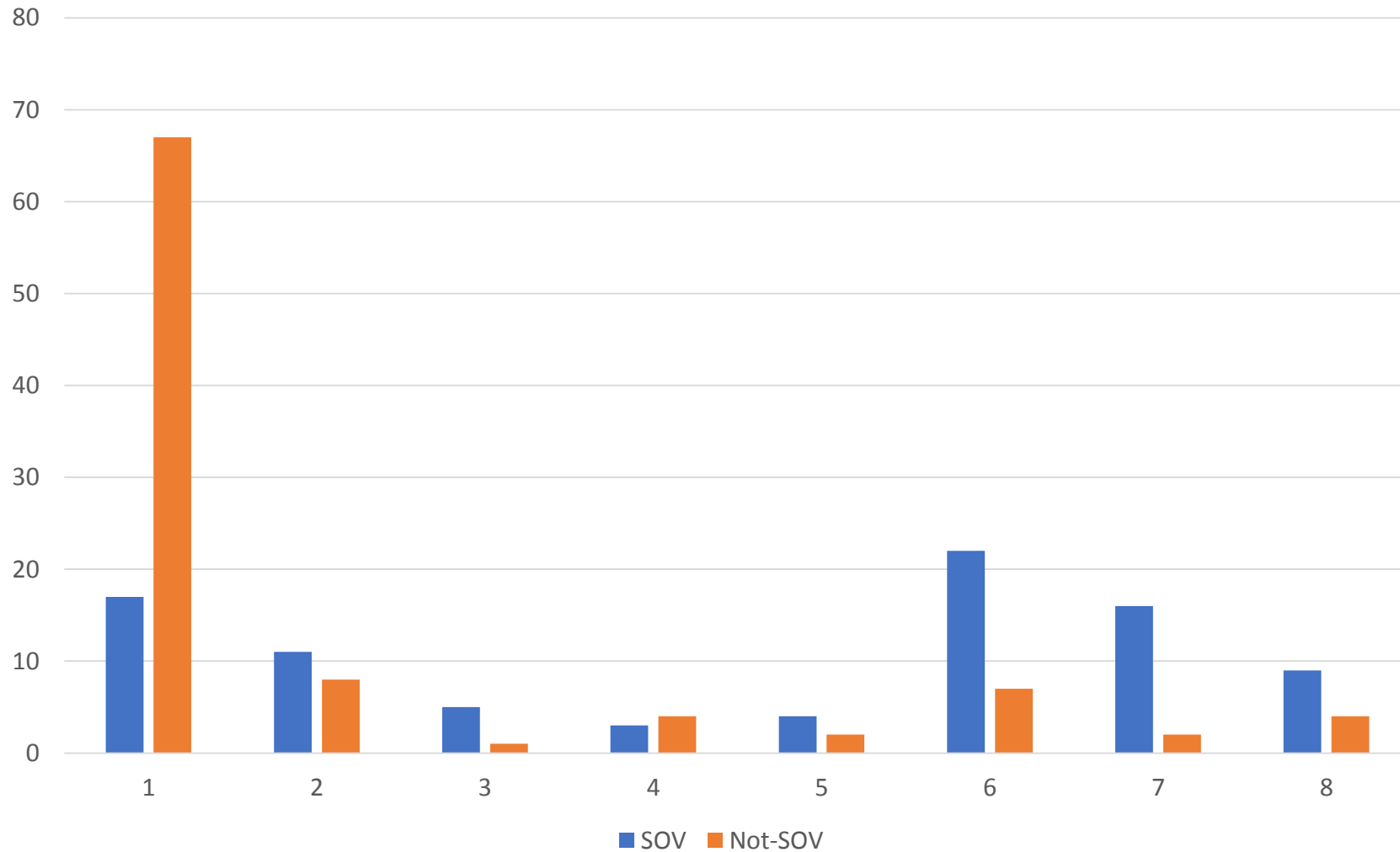
- No dominant order excluded

	Verb Final	Non-Verb Final	
Case	70	28	98
No Case	17	67	84
	87	95	182

- Critical value: 3.84
- $\chi^2=47.5$
- $p < .00001$
- Effect even stronger

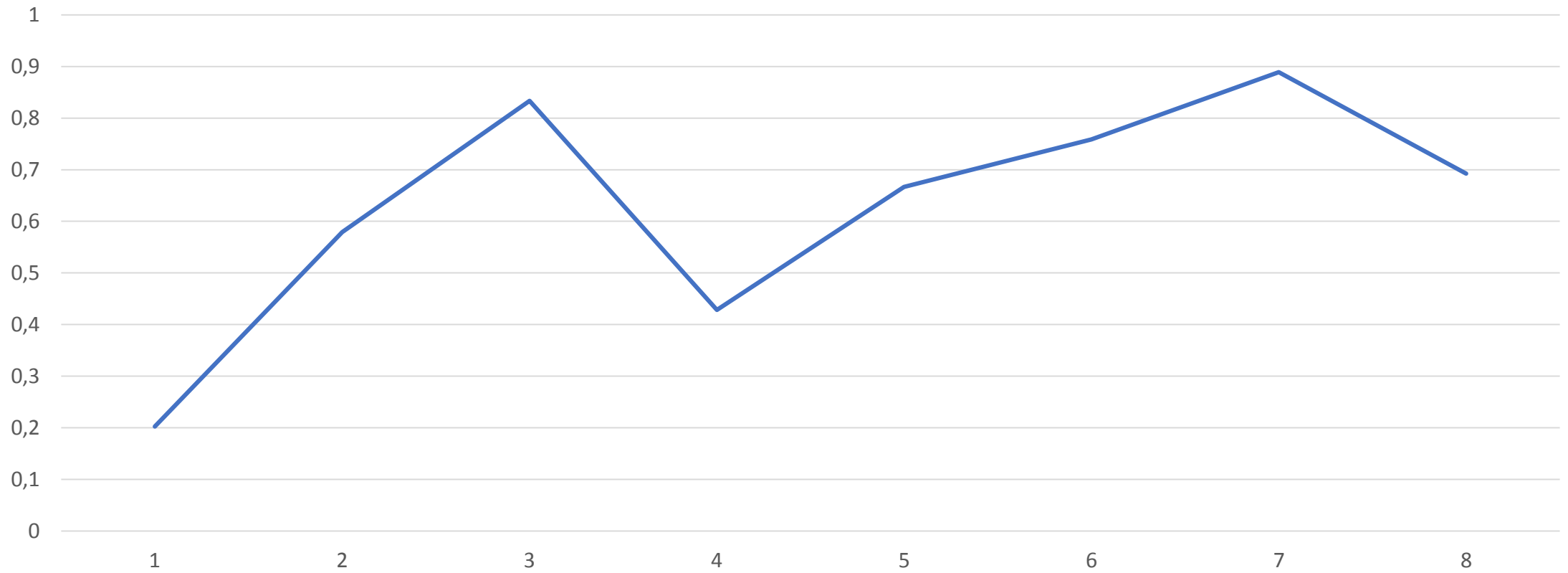
Results

Number of case marking languages



Results

SOV-probability



Dicussion

- Explanation 1 – Topicalization of O
- Explanation 2 – Clear structure as soon as possible
- Explanation 3 – Easier grammaticalization in SOV-languages

Topicalized objects

- SOV-order results in OSV with topicalization
- SOV and OSV not distinguishable without cases
- SVO-order results in OSV with topicalization

Topicalized objects

- Example: Case marking in German subordinate clauses

a) dass die Frau den Mann lieb-t

that the.NOM woman.NOM the.ACC man.ACC love-3SG

that the woman loves the man

b) dass den Mann die Frau lieb-t

that the.ACC man.ACC the.NOM woman.NOM love-3SG

that the woman loves *the man*

-> Topicalization achieved

Topicalized objects

- Example: Case syncretism in German subordinate clauses

c) dass die Frau das Kind lieb-t
that the.NOM woman.NOM the.ACC child.ACC love-3SG
that the woman loves the child

d) dass das Kind die Frau lieb-t
that the.NOM child.NOM the.ACC woman.ACC love-3SG
that the child loves the woman

not: that the woman loves *the child*

Early information on semantic roles

- Hearer wants to be informed about semantic roles as soon as possible
- V-initial languages correlate with head marking (Nichols 1992: 105)
- Otomí (Oto-Manguéan; Mexico):
bimədí biʔúmbi ya mfeí gǎʔθo ya xǎʔí
he-began-it he-gave-him the blows all the person
‘All the people began to hit him.’ (Hess 1968: 111)
- V-final languages in parallel mark the nouns

Grammaticalization

- Languages prefer suffixes over prefixes (Hawkins/Gilligan 1988)
- Case markers often derive from nouns, verbs or adpositions (Vellupilai 2012: 399)
- Example: Estonian (Uralic, Finnic)
Adposition 'kaas' (with) > comitative marker '-ga' (Stolz 2006: 364)
ta ela-b selle-s toa-s koos kahe õe-ga
she live-3SG this-INESS room-INESS together two.GEN sister-COM
'She lives in this room together with two sisters.'
- Adpositions and verbs both follow marked nouns in SOV-languages
- Easier grammaticalization into case markers (suffixes)

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