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## VERB-FINAL ORDERS IN SLAVONIC-SERBIAN: LINGUISTIC FACTORS

This paper presents quantitative evidence of object-verb (OV) orders leading to the clause final position of the verb in *Kratka vsemirna istorija od Georgija Magaraševića, profesora (1831)*, written in Slavonic-Serbian, and argues that OV orders arise not (only) as a stylistic feature of the so-called baroque configuration of the sentence, but due to linguistic factors. We show that grammatical factors influencing the rates of OV orders are statistically significant. Finally, we argue that since neither OV nor VO comes with a unique information-structural interpretation (IS), the frequency and ‘oddity of’ OV orders comes from the fact that what is IS/pragmatically marked are not discourse referents (terms) but predicates, and that the relevant IS notion is predicate focus. While some uses of predicate focus marking are difficult to motivate, our corpus offers evidence that predicate focus can be employed as a means of indicating discourse subordination and narrative discourse development.

*Key words:* Slavonic-Serbian, verb-final orders, OV/VO variation, predicate focus marking.

У овом раду представљају се квантитативни подаци о реду речи објекат-глагол (OV), који доводе до финалне позиције глагола у *Крајњој всемирној историји од Георгија Маџарашевића, професора (1831)*, писаној на славоноспском језику, на основу којих се предлаже да OV ред речи не настаје (само) као стилистичка одлика такозване барокне конфигурације реченице, већ је последица лингвистичких фактора. Утрђује се да су граматички фактори који утичу на OV ред речи статистички значајни. Будући да не постоји јединствена информацијско-структурна интерпретација ни OV ни VO реда речи, претпоставља се да висока фреквентност OV реда речи (због које се из данашње перспективе сматрају изузетно до „неприродно” маркираним) потиче од чињенице да се у њима примарно обележавају информацијско-структурна својства предиката, а не референата у дискурсу. Иако је релативно тешко пронаћи разлоге за посебно обележавање фокуса на предикату, подаци у корпусу показују да предикатски фокус може бити средство обележавања дискурсне субординације и развоја наративног дискурса.

*Кључне речи:* славоноспски, финални положај глагола, варијација OV/VO реда речи, обележавање предикатског фокуса.

**1. INTRODUCTION.** Verb-final orders represent one of the dominant features in Slavonic-Serbian (a literary language of mid/late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century Serbian authors in Vojvodina, cf. Ivić 1998; MLADENOVIĆ 1969, a.o.). In present-day Serbian, verb-final orders are considerably marked, and the high frequency of such orders in Slavonic-Serbian is assumed to be motivated by stylistic reasons, under foreign influence (GRICKAT 1987; SUBOTIĆ 2007). In this paper, I will propose that OV orders, and the verb-final effect in general, can be captured in terms of linguistic factors.<sup>1</sup> Based on the quantitative empirical evidence from *Kratka vsemirna istorija od Georgija Magaraševića, profesora (1831)* (*A Short History of the World*,

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<sup>1</sup> Given that in languages standardly labeled as ‘verb-final’ (German or Latin, for example) the position of PPs is not categorically preverbal, here I will also make use of the idealized generalization that OV equals ‘verb-final’, even though the verb is actually not in the clause final position.

by *Georgije Magarašević, Professor*, 1831) (AJDŽANOVIĆ – BJELAKOVIĆ 2013),<sup>2</sup> I propose that certain factors giving rise to verb-final orders are too systematic for them to be considered purely stylistic or to be imitations of ‘verb-final’ languages such as Latin or German. Specifically, I will focus on the relative ordering of the verb and the nominal object (OV or VO), with occasional reference to the position of PP modifiers (adjuncts). As OV orders alternate with VO orders, both will be quantified, and the rates will be correlated with grammatical factors such as clause type (main/subordinate) and verb type (finite/non-finite). As neither grammatical factor categorically leads to OV or VO, I will examine the role of information-structural (IS) factors in the variation, and propose that object (and adjunct) preposing is motivated by information-structural (IS) marking. But unlike present-day Serbian, what is IS marked in Slavonic-Serbian is not only discourse participants (terms), but predicates as well. Namely, verb-final orders can be employed to ensure that the verb/predicate alone is in the clausal focus position. Compared to IS marking of terms, predicate focus marking yields much subtler pragmatic effects, which are not easily or immediately observable. Moreover, in some grammatical contexts, the strong preference for verb-final orders makes the role of predicate focus marking pragmatically irrelevant, as V-final comes close to being an indicator of a specific syntactic structure. Still, the fact that this strong preference can be overridden by IS factors, speaks in favor of the hypothesis that verb-final orders do reflect a specific IS configuration, despite it being difficult to motivate in discourse-pragmatic terms. Also, the grammatical contexts where OV and VO orders are balanced (in ‘free variation’) suggest that the reasons for predicate focus marking (use of OV/verb-final orders) can be sought in the way the narrative discourse is structured.

**2. BACKGROUND.** Before we present quantitative and interpetational differences between OV and VO orders, we need to lay out some basic theoretical assumptions and highlight the research problem.

**2.1. BASIC THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS.** In this paper, the basic assumptions about the syntactic structure are within the general theoretical framework of Generative grammar (CHOMSKY 1993, a.o). Thus, syntactic structure is a hierarchical configuration in which every phrase is a combination of a head and its projection (argument, adjunct, specifier). The clausal architecture includes three domains: vP/VP (verb phrase) TP (tense phrase) and CP (complementizer phrase).

The assumptions about IS marking and discourse development essentially follow KRIFKA 2008, who relies on Stalnaker’s (1974) view that communication involves continuous change of the Common Ground (information shared by the interlocutors). The basic IS notions are topic, focus and givenness.<sup>3</sup> I depart from

<sup>2</sup> It may seem too hasty to make generalizations about the entire Slavonic-Serbian based on one text. Moreover, as Ajdžanović and Bjelaković (2013: 9) state, *Kratka vsemirna istorija* was written in a special ‘type’ of Slavonic-Serbian, the so-called Dositej-type of language, which has more features of Serbian-proper/Serbian vernacular, compared to the earlier literary language forms (cf. Ivić 1998: 139–142; Mladenović 1969: 43–53). Antić 2019 demonstrates that *Kratka vsemirna istorija* has all the features identified in other texts written in the Dostej-type of Slavonic-Serbian. It is thus clear that the term ‘Slavonic-Serbian’ used here is simplified for convenience, and should be understood only in this sense.

<sup>3</sup> At some points in the discussion of Givenness, I will rely on Prince’s (1981) taxonomy of cognitive statuses of referents.

Krifka's view of focus, and adopt that of Zimmermann (2008), who argues that contrastive focus is an independent focus category, with unique pragmatic-semantic characteristics. Semantically, focus always evokes alternatives, but pragmatically it marks unexpectedness. In that sense, the term contrastive should not be confused with focus used for true 'contrast'. Contrastive focus will be kept apart from new information focus. After NEELEMAN et al. 2009, I will take that in Slavic new information focus is clause-final (but the clause final position is not uniquely associated with new information focus). Crucially for the analysis presented here, I follow ZIMMERMANN 2016 that not only terms (discourse referents) but also predicates (verbs or VPs) can be focus marked. The term *predicate focus marking* will refer to the latter case.

2.2. WHAT MAKES THE SYNTAX OF SLAVONIC-SERBIAN SPECIAL. Slavonic-Serbian, or more precisely, the Slavonic-Serbian of the Dositej-type (*Dositejan language*)<sup>4</sup> under investigation here is often characterized as a literary language idiom whose base is primarily vernacular Serbian, with elements of the earlier Russian Church Slavonic, particularly at the higher lexical level (IVIĆ 1998; MLADENOVIĆ 1969; SUBOTIĆ 2007). Without denying the Serbian grammar base of the Dositejan Slavonic-Serbian, Subotić (2007: 245) emphasizes that the syntax is still relatively removed from the vernacular Serbian, exhibiting features inherited from the earlier Church-Slavonic literary idiom.<sup>5</sup> These inherited features are characterized as 'baroque style' (GRICKAT 1987; SUBOTIĆ 2007). The 'baroque sentence' is characterized as long, heavy, ornate and difficult to process. Some of the features are purely stylistic (e.g., parallelism, the use of asyndeton to the extent of run-on sentences), while others pertain to the word order of sentence elements. Both Grickat (1987) and Subotić (2007) attribute the 'baroque configuration' of the sentence to the Latin-German influence. Subotić (2007) lists the following syntactic features which characterize the 'baroque' Slavonic-Serbian sentence: clause final position of the infinitive, final position of the predicate, preposing of objects and adjuncts, discontinuous phrases, NP internal inversion of head-adjuncts and preposing of genitive phrases, and syntactic parallelism.

On most accounts, Slavic languages have been 'underlyingly' SVO ('head initial', i.e., phrasal heads always precede their complements) since the earliest stage. Even though Old Church Slavonic (OCS) has both VO and OV orders, VO is considered to be unmarked (cf. WILLIS 2000, a.o).<sup>6</sup> Pavlović (2011) convincingly demonstrates that Old Serbian had all the features of 'non-configurationality' (in the sense that the ordering of predicates, arguments and adjuncts is heavily influenced by IS and pragmatics). In that respect, Old Serbian patterns with OCS, but differs slightly from Old Russian, where certain 'non-configurational features' are absent.

<sup>4</sup> After Dositej Obradović (1739/1741-1811), the most influential writer, scholar and educational reformer of the period, recognized for advancing vernacular Serbian in the literary language.

<sup>5</sup> It may seem contradictory to state that the grammar of Dositejan Slavonic-Serbian is genuinely Serbian, while the syntax is not, given that syntax is a (if not the) core property of grammar. But the term syntax here seems to refer to linearizations/word order patterns, rather than core syntactic/grammar rules.

<sup>6</sup> An opposite view is given in PANCHEVA 2008, who argues that OCS TP can be both head-initial and head-final, thus exhibiting the 'competing grammar' scenario. MIGDALSKI 2018 gives a number of arguments why this hypothesis cannot hold.

Given that in its development Serbian has been shown to be head-initial, the presence of head-final linearizations in Slavonic-Serbian cannot be viewed as a relic of an earlier head-final underlying structure of Slavonic-Serbian. Even though we cannot view Slavonic-Serbian as a stage in the development/continuity of Serbian, it seems safe to assume that the syntax of Slavonic-Serbian can be accounted for under the hypothesis that it is also a head-initial ‘non-configurational’ language. However, the overwhelming presence of preposed complements (both nominal and non-finite VP) is an oddity, and it is not surprising that the authors such as Grickat or Subotić attribute it to foreign influence (of Latin and/or German), adopted as stylistic features of a particular genre. Given that in all the stages of the vernacular Serbian preposing is employed for IS/pragmatic purposes, to test the hypothesis that Slavonic-Serbian employs the same strategy, we need to measure out the rates of OV orders in particular syntactic contexts, and establish what exactly makes preposing, and consequently verb-final orders in Slavonic-Serbian so ‘foreign’.

**3. THE CORPUS, QUANTITATIVE EVIDENCE.** In this study, verb-final orders will be investigated based the relative positioning of NP objects with (a) synthetic (‘tensed’) lexical verbs ( $V_{TNS}$ ) and (b) l-participles ( $V_{PTC}$ ), which, together with the auxiliary *jesam* ‘be’, forms the perfect tense.<sup>7</sup> Occasionally, we will make reference to the position of PP adjuncts, again only in the presence of an object. The corpus sentences from *Kratka vsemirna istorija*, extracted from Magarašević’s text alone (i.e., excluding the Foreword in the 1831 edition written by Pavle Stamatović), amounting to 3860 clauses, have been syntactically parsed and quantified with the help of fourth-year’s students at the Department of English, University of Novi Sad, in the research course Theoretical Grammar 1 (fall semester 2022).<sup>8</sup>

Before we present the rates of OV and VO orders, some clarifications about the factors and the structural domain of variation chosen for this study are in order. Namely, not all OV and VO linearizations have been taken into the count. I have excluded the cases where either the object or the verb is in a high (TP-peripheral) position in the clause, yielding OV or VO orders for independent reasons.<sup>9</sup> Also, all finite verb forms are treated as tensed, including the present tense form invariably introduced by the complementizer *da* in subordinate clauses. Due to the relatively small corpus size, I have also chosen to include coordinated clauses, although they are not of uniform structural size, in fact, often much smaller than those of uncoordinated ones.

<sup>7</sup> Non-finite (infinitival) v/VP complements will not be dealt with here, because the ordering complement-head and head-complement seems to be influenced by a much larger set of factors. We leave this for future research.

<sup>8</sup> I am particularly grateful to Isidora Bjelaković, who sparked my interest in Slavonic-Serbian, and Peda Kovačević, who helped me with many aspects of the corpus collection.

<sup>9</sup> Both high objects and high verbs have been diagnosed via ‘inversion’ with an overt subject; high participles have been identified based on the participle-auxiliary clitic orders. Since both the subject and the clitics are generally in a high position in the clause, they are good indicators of the high position of the elements preceding them. This decision has removed unambiguous instances of high verb position. On the other hand, since subjects are often null, some orders with null subjects and tensed verbs, which remained in the corpus, could in principle feature verbs in the same high position. While this may lead to somewhat higher rates of VO with tensed verbs, we had to make this compromise in the absence of reliable diagnostics.

3.1. THE RATES OF VO AND OV ORDERS. The rates for VO and OV orders in clauses with the perfect tense are given Table 1. Matrix clauses are divided into uncoordinated (MAT), comma-coordinated (formally uncoordinated matrix clause following a comma or semicolon; MAT-COMMA) and conjunct-coordinated (MAT-COORD). Subordinate clauses (SUB) are all treated as one group.

Table 1. The relative ordering of the I-participle and objects in main and subordinate clauses

	MAT	MAT-COMMA	MAT-COORD	ALL MAT	ALL SUB	Total
V <sub>PTC</sub> O	10	7	5	22	14	36
OV <sub>PTC</sub>	24	20	22	66	120	186

There are two main findings that emerge from the figures in Table 1. First, OV orders are strongly preferred with verbs in the participial form. Overall, in such contexts, there are 186 attested OV orders in contrast to 36 VO configurations. A chi-squared test confirmed that the difference was statistically significant with a very high effect size ( $\chi^2 = 101.351$ ,  $p < .00001$ ). Second, subordinate clauses show a strong preference for the OV order as evidenced by the fact that there were only 14 attestations of VO orders in subordinate clauses and 120 attested OV structures ( $\chi^2 = 83.851$ ,  $p < .00001$ ).

The rates for OV/VO orders with a synthetic ('tensed') verb are given in Table 2.

Table 2. The relative ordering of the tensed verb and objects in main and subordinate clauses

	MAT	MAT-COMMA	MAT-COORD	ALL MAT	ALL SUB	Total
V <sub>TNS</sub> O	77	43	72	192	19	211
OV <sub>TNS</sub>	12	6	53	71	129	200

The findings for tensed verb forms show a pattern different from the one observed with participles. In MAT and MAT-COMMA clauses, the VO order is used predominantly. Out of 99 matrix clauses with tensed verb forms, 77 exhibited the VO order, which is a statistically significant difference ( $\chi^2 = 47.472$ ,  $p < 0.00001$ ). MAT-COMMA clauses revealed the same tendency, albeit with a smaller effect size. On the other hand, in stark contrast to matrix clauses, SUB clauses with tensed verb forms showed a strong preference for the OV order, reflected in 129 attestations and only 19 VO structures, which was also a rather strong and statistically significant effect ( $\chi^2 = 81.757$ ,  $p < 0.00001$ ). Finally, coordinated matrix clauses exhibited a kind of free variation of the relative order of the verb and the object (72 VO orders vs. 53 OV orders), and the chi-squared test did not confirm the statistical significance of the observed difference in figures ( $\chi^2 = 2.888$ ,  $p = 0.08924$ ).

3.2. FOREIGN INFLUENCE/IMITATION OF LATIN AND/OR GERMAN. As so many participles are clause final, one cannot but wonder if Slavonic-Serbian has indeed 'borrowed' the head-final vP from German and/or Latin. Given that NP complements of infinitives are also predominantly preverbal, we may be inclined to think that head-final vP are employed in non-finite contexts. The foreign influence hypothesis, without sufficient explications of the process itself, is impossible to falsify. Some 'extraordinary' features of Slavonic-Serbian resemble German, some

resemble Latin. Even though Latin is commonly treated as a *bona fide* OV language, Danckaert (2017) shows that Latin was not uniformly head-final in its history. He demonstrates that in lexical VPs the rate of VO orders was relatively constant at 20%. Similarly, PP adjuncts are allowed in the postverbal position (cf. GORDON 2020), obliterating verb-final linearizations. German, on the other hand, is ‘more’ head-final, generally banning nominal objects in the postverbal position, and rather exceptionally allowing postverbal PP adjuncts. So, when Slavonic-Serbian shows variation, it ‘follows’ Latin, rather than German. If no or little variation is observed, as in subordinate clauses, then the German influence would have to be resorted to, as the Latin syntax is not asymmetric in main and subordinate clauses. If, on the other hand, Slavonic-Serbian ‘follows’ German in subordinate clauses, then one should not expect discontinuous and phrase-internally scrambled object NPs to be frequent in the preverbal area, as discontinuous NPs are rather restricted in German (but not in Latin, McFADDEN 1999). Also, the foreign influence would predict that the relative ordering of preverbal objects and PP adjuncts to be conditioned by the object type (in German objects precede PPs when they are definite, while in Latin referential objects precede PPs, and non-referential ones follow them (cf. DEVINE – STEPHENS 2006). This does not seem to be the case in Slavonic-Serbian, as non-referential objects can precede preposed PPs.

Even from this brief (and rather simplified) overview of the syntactic behavior of verbs and complements and Latin and German, it is clear that the elucidation of the foreign influence is difficult to achieve.<sup>10</sup> For that reason, it seems fitting to first examine whether ‘native resources’ can be held responsible for odd distributions of OV and VO orders. As the word order variation in Slavic is generally correlated with IS and pragmatics, in the following section we will try to establish whether Slavonic-Serbian uses syntactic displacement for specific IS/pragmatic marking.

**4. IS FACTORS IN THE OV/VO VARIATION.** In this section we will examine to what extent IS/pragmatic factors can explain the variations observed in Tables 1 and 2. As tense has been shown to play an important role, sentences with the perfect tense ( $V_{PTC}$ ) and the present, aorist and imperfect ( $V_{TNS}$ ) will be discussed separately.

**4.1. IS IN  $V_{PTC}$  O/OV $_{PTC}$  ORDERS.** In clauses with the predicate in the perfect tense, the dominant order is OV $_{PTC}$ .  $V_{PTC}$ O is much less frequent, and we will first see what licenses these ‘exceptional’ orders.

**4.1.1. ‘EXCEPTIONAL’  $V_{PTC}$ O.** In languages where the OV order is canonical, dominant or preferred, VO orders might arise for some independent structural reasons. Second conjunct objects, coordinated objects, objects modified by relative clauses, or simply objects which are ‘heavy’ (usually those containing more than three words) undergo extraposition, or are difficult to front (cf. BEHAGHEL 1939;

<sup>10</sup> This, of course, does not make the foreign influence hypothesis impossible. An anonymous reviewer warns of a high probability that *Kratka vsemirna istorija* is not an original text, but a translation, given that Magarašević is also attributed a translation from German of another historical text (cf. AJDŽANOVIĆ – BJELAKOVIĆ 2013: 8, fn.4). As at the moment I have no clear evidence that the work under analysis here is in fact a translation, I cannot entertain this idea any further.

ROSENBAUM 1967, among many others).<sup>11</sup> This can also be observed in our corpus. In both matrix and subordinate clauses, many postverbal object are heavy. (1) illustrates a case where the heavy second conjunct is postverbal, while the short first conjunct is preverbal.

- (1) Oni su i staklo izobrel i **purpuru ili** bagrjanovidnu  
 They aux.cl also glass invented and purpura or purple  
 boju  
 color  
 ‘They also invented glass and the color purple’ (p. 69)

Heaviness however, is not a sufficient condition for an object to occur post-verbally (as heavy objects are possible in the preverbal position). What seems to be the deciding factor is focus: postverbal objects introduce new discourse referents in the sense that these referents will be elaborated in the following discourse. In (2) the heavy NP object ‘animals and plants that were either scary or useful to the Egyptians’ are presented as discourse referents and the discourse continues with specifying and describing particular animals and plants (crocodile, cat, onion, garlic, bull). Note also that the heavy object is actually *not* extraposed to the clause final position, as it precedes the short PP *za Boga* ‘as God’.

- (2) Egipťjani su poćitovali **ćivotna i rastenija, koja su**  
 Egyptians aux.cl worshiped animals and plants which aux.cl  
**im polezna ili ućasna bila** za Boga  
 to-them.cl useful or horrible been for God  
 ‘The Egyptians worshiped animals and plants, which were useful or horrible to them, as God’ (p. 63)

Being ‘in focus’ does not entail being a new discourse referent. In (3), the object *prostotu* ‘the plebs’ is part of the Common Ground (CG) (the preceding sentence establishes that in the Roman state conflicts between the patricians and the plebs arose again); it is postverbal not just because it is modified by a relative clause, but because the relative clause picks up the referent *prostota* ‘the plebs’ as the discourse topic in the following utterances, i.e., the discourse continues to be about what the plebs did (the event of the first *secessio plebis* in the Roman history).

- (3) Blagorodni su *ugnjetavali* **prostotu,** koja ostavi Rim i  
 the-patricians aux.cl oppressed the-plebs who left Rome and  
 otide na oblićnju planinu Celiju...  
 went to nearby hill Caelia  
 ‘The patricians oppressed the plebs, who left Rome and went to the nearby Caelian Hill...’  
 (p. 95)

<sup>11</sup> Dative complements of control verbs also might prefer to stay adjacent to the postverbal clausal complement whose null subject (PRO) it controls (i.e., provides interpretation).

Focus on the postverbal object can be contrastive. The object *evropejska monarha* ‘a European monarch’ in (4) is to be interpreted only in relation to the alternative, non-European set of monarchs.

- (4) I to je, bez sumnje, prvi put bilo da je  
 And it aux.cl without doubt first time been that aux.cl  
 ledeno more na sebi imalo **evropejska monarha**  
 North Sea on it had European monarch  
 ‘It was, undoubtedly, the first time that the North Sea had a European monarch’ (p. 253)

Some  $V_{PTC}O$  orders, however, do not involve focusing of the object. Non-referential objects *uticaj* ‘influence’ with the light verb *imati* ‘have’, and *njegovog srca* ‘his heart’ in the idiomatic predicate *kosnuti se nečijeg srca* ‘take to heart’ in (5), obviously do not introduce new referents (new information focus marked), nor are contrastively focused. Contrastive, alternative evoking focus is on some other element in the sentence. In (5a) it is the PP complement, indicated by the presence of the focus particle *i* ‘also’. Similarly, in (5b’) the focused subject opens up a list of things associated with the dignity of the Roman rule which did not affect the Asian and northern barbarians (focus alternatives). In both examples, the non-focused part of the proposition is part of the CG (‘Reformation having influence’ and ‘Asian and northern barbarians not caring for anything’ are given earlier in the discourse).

- (5) a. Reformacija je također *i* na nauke *i*  
 reformation aux.cl likewise also on sciences and  
*hudožestva* imala **svoje vtećenije**  
 arts had its influence  
 ‘The Reformation also had influence on the sciences and arts’ (p. 239)
- b. Asijatski i severni varvari nisu ni za što marili; staro dostojanstvo rimskog vladenija nije nji[h] ni do udivljenija ni do počitanija dovelo;  
 ‘Asian and northern barbarians did not care about anything; the old dignity of the Roman rule did not lead them to admiration and respect’
- b’. ukrašeniye gradova nije kosnulo se **njiyovog srca**  
 decoration of-cities not-aux affect rfl.cl their heart  
 ‘Decoration of cities did not affect their hearts’ (p. 133)

Even though we have identified focus as possibly the crucial factor in licensing  $V_{PTC}O$ , this still happens rather rarely, and we cannot expect that objects with new referents would be absent in  $OV_{PTC}$  orders, or that objects cannot be contrastively focused preverbally. As throughout its history Serbian has shown to allow  $OV$  linearizations, via leftward movement/fronting/preposing, and given that this movement is generally thought to be motivated by IS/pragmatic reasons, we need to inspect whether we can find a common factor in Slavonic-Serbian  $OV_{PTC}$  orders as well. While the studies into a more precise characterization of the IS/pragmatic effects of  $OV$  orders in Old Serbian are still lacking,  $OV$  orders in present-day Serbian (and other contemporary Slavic languages) are assumed to arise due



to ‘scrambling’, driven by some topicality or focus feature of the object. We will thus first try to establish to what extent object preposing in our corpus correlates with IS marking of the object.

4.1.2.  $OV_{PTC}$  ORDERS: TOPICALITY AND/OR GIVENNESS OF THE OBJECT? Even though the term topic/topicality is used in the description of object scrambling in Slavic, it is difficult to give a fully reliable characterization of ‘topicality’ as most IS studies of topics are about the properties of sentence topics (be they subjects or clause-initial objects). I will assume that in present-day Serbian, clause internal scrambled objects are topical in the sense of ‘aboutness’ and that they must be +Given (part of the CG). Thus, new discourse referents will not be successfully scrambled. Non-referential nominal objects can scramble, but under the condition that their denotations have been under some kind of discussion in the preceding discourse. If –Given, fronted objects can only be focused.

In the corpus, very few fronted objects actually meet the topicality criterion. (6) is an illustration of Peter the Great’s inclination towards science and learning, which he wanted to spread in the whole country. The plural indefinite *škole* ‘schools’ can be said to be +Given by inference relation to science and learning. But *škole* does not seem to meet the requirement of aboutness. So, we might say that marking the IS category givenness is what makes Slavonic-Serbian odd from the present-day perspective.

- (6) Sam pisati nije znao, nego posle rado tome  
 himself write.INF not-aux known but later eagerly that  
 se naučio, on je škole podizao...  
 rfl.cl learned he aux.cl schools founded  
 ‘He himself did not know how to write but he eagerly learned it later, he founded schools...’  
 (p. 159)

However, neither topicality nor givenness of referents seems to be the licensing factor of  $OV_{PTC}$  orders. This is evident in (7b), where both the subject (Belisarius) and the object referents (Vandal and Ostrogothic kingdoms) are discourse new. The segment is about Justinian I and (7b) gives the events illustrating how he was more a fortunate than a talented ruler.

- (7) a. Justinijan Prvi vladao je od 527. do 565. g.: muž koji je više sreće nego darovanja imao.  
 ‘Justinian I ruled from 527 to 565: a man who had more luck than talent’
- b. Pod njim je Velizarij 534. g. Vandalsko carstvo  
 under him aux.cl Belisarius 534 Vandal kingdom  
 u Afriki, a Ostgotsko u Italiji Carigradu  
 in Africa and Ostrogothic in Italy to-Constantinople  
 pokorio i u Italiji grčki egzarhat osnovao.  
 subjugated and in Italy Greek exarchate founded  
 ‘Under him, in 534, Belisarius conquered the Vandal kingdom in Africa and the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy for Constantinople and founded a Greek exarchate in Italy’ (p. 151)

Discourse new referents can also be observed in subordinate clauses with  $OV_{PTC}$ . The discourse preceding the temporal clause in (8) in no way makes the fronted object *najveću biblioteku mudrosti u Aleksandriji* ‘the biggest library of the ancient world in Alexandria’ given. One might argue that the author treats the existence of this famous library as common, encyclopedic knowledge, but this cannot be something we can take for granted. The subject referent (caliphs) is also discourse new.

- (8) Kad Su kalife **najveću biblioteku drevnosti u**  
 when aux.cl caliphs biggest library of-antiquity in  
**Aleksandriji** zapalili,  
 Alexandria burned  
 ‘When the caliphs burned the biggest library of the ancient world in Alexandria’ (p. 147)

In addition to novel discourse referents in OV orders, what additionally makes V-final orders in *Vsemirna istorija sveta* so heavily marked and ‘foreign’ is that adjuncts, or more specifically, PPs, which in present-day Serbian occur postverbally, prepose as well, often together with the object. If both constituents move leftward because of topicality and/or givenness, then we must deal with a case of multiple topicalization, which is not impossible but should be highly marked. Needless to say, preposed adjuncts in the corpus need not be topical, or even given. In fact, they often introduce new information. This is illustrated in (9). While the referent of the object, *Turke* ‘the Turks’ is topical and given in the utterance immediately preceding it, the location in the PP adjunct *kod Sente* ‘at/near Senta’ is not.

- (9) koji Je Turke **kod Sente** sasvim *razbio*,  
 who aux.cl Turks at Senta completely destroyed  
 ‘who completely destroyed the Turks near Senta...’ (p. 241)

Some of the fronted objects are contrastively focused, and potentially match the cases of (contrastive) focus scrambling. (10) is an instance of multiple focus marking, where all the constituents except the verb are interpreted relative to the alternative set given in the preceding clause (as the utterance is about the use science to invent new weapons, where Archimedes’ and Callinicus’ inventions against the sieges of Syracuse and Constantinople are compared). While focus triggered scrambling is possible in present-day Serbian, having multiple focus moved constituents with – Given referents is pragmatically odd.

- (10) a. Tako se naročito kaže o Arhimedu 212. godine pre Hrista da je s različnim mašinama otečestvo svoje, grad Sirakuzanski protiv Rimljana branio,  
 ‘So it is especially said of Archimedes in 212 BC, that he, with various machineries defended his homeland, the city of Syracuse’
- b. tako je Kalinik godine 676. posle Hrista  
 so aux.cl Callinicus year 676 after Christ  
**Carigrad** protiv napadenija Arava branio  
 Constantinople against attacks of-Arabs defended  
 ‘so did Callinicus in 676 AD defended Constantinople against the attacks by the Arabs’ (p. 197)

The range of IS interpretations of  $OV_{PTC}$  orders can be summarized as follows. Some  $OV_{PTC}$  involve IS marking of the object. Preverbal objects are rarely topical, and most of them are +Given, in the widest sense (including inferable and plausible referents). Some are focused, often in a multiple focus structure. Multiple contrastive focus utterances do not evoke new alternative sets, but are interpreted relative to the alternative set already in the CG, and in a way pattern with +Given interpretations in being dependent on the CG. However, in so many other cases, preverbal objects easily have novel discourse referents, and it is clear that  $OV_{PTC}$  orders do not have a unique IS interpretation. In addition, the fact that both objects and PP adjuncts prepose, without being triggered by givenness or contrastive focus feature strongly suggests that objects and PPs prepose for other reasons. On the other hand, the ‘exceptional’ VO orders are not random, as we can clearly identify focus as a common factor. But  $V_{PTC}O$  orders do not have a uniform interpretation in terms of focus, as they arise when either the object itself is focused, or the focus is on a PP adjunct or the subject.

4.2. IS IN  $OV_{TNS}/V_{TNS}O$  ORDERS. In main clauses, the  $OV_{TNS}$  order is rare and exceptional in subordinate clauses. Coordinate main clauses pattern with both main and subordinate clauses, as they generally employ both orders (with only a slight preference for  $V_{TNS}O$  order). In this section, we will illustrate how IS marking works in the exceptional or lower-frequency cases. As true variation is found in MAT-COORD, both orders will be commented on.

4.2.1. ‘EXCEPTIONAL’  $V_{TNS}O$  IN SUBORDINATE CLAUSES. Subordinate clauses with a tensed verb do not differ from those with a participle, as in them as well we find that the object occurs postverbally under the same condition.

Again, the main factor in licensing VO orders is focus. If the embedded clause introduces a discourse referent, as in (11), the opening sentence in the chapter dedicated to the invention of paper and typography, sheets on which the Egyptians could write need to be overtly marked as new information focus.

- (11) Stari           jošt           Egipťjani           upotrebljavali    su           koren    tako  
 ancient        yet           Egyptians        used               aux.cl    root    of-so  
 nazvanog     drveta     papirusa        na    to    da           otud       prave  
 called        tree        papyrus        on    that   that       from-it    make  
 listove     po    kojima     su       pisali  
 sheets    on    which     aux.cl   written

‘The ancient Egyptians (yet) used the root of the so-called tree papyrus to make sheets on which they wrote’ (p. 199)

Object referents undergoing a change of state need new information focus and postverbal position. In (12) the regions formerly under the Austrian rule change their status now being united as a French sister republic.

- (12) ... prinudi on ... Austriju k miru, koja je sada  
 ... forced he ... Austria to peace which aux.cl now  
 sve zemlje svoje u Italiji i Franciji ustupila, iz  
 all countries its in Italy and France surrendered, from  
 koji Bonaparte načini **Respubliku** **cisalpijsku**  
 which Bonaparte made Republic Cisalpine  
 ‘... he forced Austria towards a peace treaty, which now surrendered all its countries in Italy and France, from which he formed the Cisalpine Republic’ (p. 287)

Finally, contrastive (additive) focus on the subject, indicated by the focus particle *i* ‘and, also’ – the subject *Anglija everopejska* ‘European England’ evokes the alternative country, France, which first realized that the American colonies had grown strong.

- (13) ... da *i* *Anglija* *evropejska* upozna **krepost** **svoji**  
 ... that also England European learns strength of-its  
**kolonija...**  
 colonies  
 ‘... that European England also realizes the strength of its colonies’ (p. 271)

4.2.2. LOW FREQUENCY OF  $OV_{TNS}$  ORDERS IN MAIN CLAUSES. To address the question of relatively low frequency of  $OV_{TNS}$  orders in main clause, we need to establish what IS features these preposed object have that might tell us why tensed verbs, unlike participles, are not more permissive to OV.

From our data, it seems that the key characteristic of  $OV_{TNS}$  orders in MAT clauses is topicality of the object referent. Often, the object seems to be more topical than the subject. In (14) both the subject (Egyptians) and the object (Romans) are given in the preceding discourse (‘After these and many other rebellions, *the Macedonian state* got divided into many smaller kingdoms, which, little by little, became part of the *Roman territory*’). However, the subject *Egipćani* ‘Egyptians’ is in the part-whole relation with the Macedonian state (Egypt being one of the many countries in the ‘Macedonian state’), while the Romans, the referent of the object, is more or less explicitly given in the preceding discourse.<sup>12</sup>

- (14) Egipćani prvi, bojeći se Seleicira **Rimljane** pozovu  
 Egyptians first fearing rfl.cl Seleucus Romans call  
 u pomoć  
 to help  
 ‘The Egyptians first, being afraid of Seleucus, called the Romans to help’ (p. 91)

In (15), the subject’s referent Friedrich is topical in the preceding segment. But the exposition about Friedrich is interrupted by the events taking place in

<sup>12</sup> Note also that even though the subject is contrastively focused (cf. *prvi* ‘first’), evoking alternative states/nations who also invited Romans for help, the order is still OV rather than VO. Unlike the examples in (5) and (13), the predicate ‘asking the Romans’ for help is not part of the CG.

Austria, after which the discourse switches back to Friedrich and his reaction to these events (the object *ovu priliku* ‘this event’). Presumably, this discourse switch affects the topicality and givenness of the subject, facilitating scrambling of the more topical object.

- (15)   Fridrih        **ovu**    **priliku**    na        svoju        polzu        *obrati*  
         Friedrich    this     event     on        his        benefit     turns  
         ‘Friedrich turned this event to his benefit’ (p. 265)

It seems then that  $OV_{TNS}$  in MAT clauses involves preposing of the scrambling type: objects move because they are +Topic, +Given, and in that sense possibly least marked from the present-day perspective, unlike  $MAT\ OV_{PTC}$ , or  $OV_{TNS/PTC}$  in subordinate clauses.

4.2.3. COORDINATED MAIN CLAUSES AND  $OV_{TNS}$  ORDERS. The fact that the rate of  $OV_{TNS}$  orders does not differ significantly from  $V_{TNS}O$  orders in MAT-COORD clauses suggests that they pattern somewhere between MAT and SUB clauses. In addition to being topical, as in MAT clauses, preverbal object referents in MAT-COORD clauses can only be +Given (akin to what we find in  $OV_{PTC}$  orders in main clauses and subordinate clauses generally). But again, topicality and givenness cannot account for *all verb-final* orders. Again, we find preverbal PP adjuncts and objects introducing new referents. Even though the object, Napoleon, is given and topical, the Saint Helena Island in the preposed PP is not. In (16), the object itself introduces a new discourse referent (a new emperor). What can still save givenness as a factor in verb-finality is that with multiple preposing (object and adjunct), one of the constituents should be given. So even though Sulpicius Galba is indeed new, the PP *za imperatora* is backgrounded (the reason why Sulpicius was elected a new emperor is not because they had no emperor, for example, but because they needed to replace the emperor Nero).

- (16) a.   i        **Napoleona**   u        ostrov    Svete        Elene        *pošlju...*  
         and     Napoleon    in     island    of-Saint    Helena     send  
         ‘and sent Napoleon to Saint Helena island’
- b.   i        zato        **Sulpicija**   **Galbu**     u        Spaniji    za   imperatora  
         and     therefore   Sulpicius   Galba     in     Spain     for   emperor  
         *izaberu*  
         choose  
         ‘and that’s why they chose Sulpicius Galba as emperor’ (p. 117)

We also observe an interesting effect in coordinated  $OV_{TNS}$  clauses. It will be described as decreased topicality of referents in the following discourse. Namely, very few sentences with an  $OV_{TNS}$  conjunct are followed by utterances where either the subject (if present) or the object is topical in terms of aboutness. The same seems to hold for  $MAT\ OV_{TNS}$  clauses. In none of the examples of  $OV_{TNS}$  above does the immediately following MAT clause continue to be about the subject or

the object referent.<sup>13</sup> Roughly,  $OV_{TNS}$  indicates a subsequent discourse switch. This insight indicates that preposing of objects and adjuncts, facilitated by topicality and givenness, can serve other purposes as well.

4.2.4. COORDINATED MAIN CLAUSES AND  $V_{TNS}O$  ORDER. Coordinated main clauses largely pattern with non-coordinated main  $V_{TNS}O$  clauses in that there seem to be no restrictions on the object interpretation. So, in the postverbal position objects can (a) have new information focus (introduce new discourse referents), (b) be contrastively focused, (c) be +Given and (d) be +Given in ‘reactivated backgrounded VPs’. The interpretations in (b) and (c) are shared with preverbal objects in other sentence types. However, what distinguishes contrastively focused postverbal object from preverbal ones is that the focus alternatives evoked are not part of the CG. In (17a) the object introduces a new referent (King Jeroboam), but also evokes an alternative expression (King Rohaboam) in (17c). Unlike (16b) above, the alternative expression is in the following utterance.

- (17) a. Posle smrti njegove uzbuni se celo carstvo i na dve časti razdeli se.  
 ‘After his death the whole empire rose up and got divided into two parts’
- b. Deset kolena otpadnu i izaberu sebi kralja  
 ten tribes separated and choose themselves king  
**Jerovoama,**  
 Jeroboam  
 ‘Ten tribes separated and chose themselves King Jeroboam’
- c. a dva kolena Judino i Veniaminovo ostanu pod  
 and two tribes Judah’s and Benjamin’s remain under  
 Rovoamom.  
 Rohaboam  
 ‘and two tribes, Judah’s and Benjamin’s, remain under Rohaboam’ (p. 57)

+Given objects in the postverbal position differ from the +Given preverbal ones in the topic potential of the object referent in the subsequent discourse. If a +Given referent is in the postverbal position, the discourse is most likely to continue to be about this referent at some point. We can thus make a generalization that the common factor underling  $V_{TNS}O$  is the relevance of the object for the discourse development, irrespective of its cognitive status (given or new).

4.3. SUMMARY. Based on the description of available interpretations of  $OV$  and  $VO$  orders in our corpus, what emerges as a striking fact is that none of the  $OV/VO$  orders can be associated with one particular interpretation of the object. So, while topicality and givenness might account for some objects in the preverbal position, it cannot account for the cases of multiple fronting, where the relative givenness of the object or the PP adjunct facilitates fronting of all the ‘postverbal segment’ (and the givenness of one element can in a way ‘attract’ other postverbal

<sup>13</sup> This does not mean that the referents cannot be re-introduced as topics after a discourse switch. The point is that they cannot *continue* to be topical.

material), thus yielding a verb-final clause. Focus can account for exceptional postverbal objects in subordinate clauses and main clauses with participles, but this does not inform us why in subordinate clauses objects are normally preverbal. If novel discourse referents are exclusively introduced via new information focus, the presence of novel referents preverbally would not be expected. The role of focus in licensing postverbal objects is particularly challenged by the interpretation characterized as ‘reactivated background VPs’, which are licensed by a contrastively focused element, but this element is not the object (but subject, adjunct, and possibly the auxiliary). The conclusion we reach is that even though IS effects are observable in the OV/VO alternation, no algorithm for IS marking of referents seems possible, and hence cannot be the sole reason why verb-final orders do or do not arise.

**5. DEFOCUSING AND PREDICATE FOCUS MARKING.** As I have shown, the verb-final order cannot be accounted for in terms of IS marking of the moved elements; therefore it seems more likely that object as well as PP fronting takes place in order to IS mark the verb. I will argue that the IS notion marked on the verb is *predicate focus*, and that in such cases all postverbal elements move because they need to be defocused. Preposing is not used when the utterance is aimed to introduce new referents which will be of interest/relevance in the discourse and when the whole VP is ‘defocused’, and these are the cases when predicate focus is not marked.

Even though focus is the default interpretation of the verb, and generally needs no special indication of its IS status, Zimmermann (2016) shows that predicate focus can be marked by the same linguistic tools as terms (discourse participants in the situations), ranging from special lexical and morphological markers to syntactic displacement. Conditions on overt focus marking of VPs varies from language to language, as shown in GIVÓN 1975. Even though many details about predicate focus marking are still missing, there is enough crosslinguistic evidence showing that it *is* an IS category which *can* be marked.

The more difficult question is why predicate focus needs to be marked, especially new information focus. As predicate focus marking is not obligatory in Slavonic-Serbian, the question is why it takes place when it does, or what IS or pragmatic inference is obtained when the verb alone is in the clausal focus position. In what follows, I will present some observations and speculations about how this might work.

**5.1. MOTIVATION FOR PREDICATE FOCUS MARKING WITH TENSED VERBS.** The context where we see clear IS/pragmatic differences between OV and VO orders is with tensed verbs. Recall that  $OV_{TNS}$  affects the topicality potential of the discourse participants. In a sense then,  $OV_{TNS}$  orders are event/situation oriented. We have observed that in  $V_{TNS}$ -final order decreased topicality potential correlates with discourse switches. Upon closer inspection, it emerges that after  $OV_{TNS}$  orders, the discourse switches to a new topic or temporal frame. In that regard,  $OV_{TNS}$  orders mark the end of an episode or sub-episode. Consider (18), where all the activities performed by Napoleon after the Congress started, are given in the comma and conjunct coordinated clauses with the verb-final order. Under our

predicate focus hypothesis, such orders will indicate event-orientation of the discourse, rather than participant-orientation. And indeed, the passage is not really about Napoleon, but the events which he instigated. The continuation in (18b) takes these events (*ova priljučenija* ‘these events’), rather than any of the terms/discourse participants, as the subject/topic.

- (18) a. Tek što se Kongres taj započne, a Napoleon  
 as-soon-as rfl.cl Congress that begins but Napoleon  
 iz Elbe **pobegne**, u Franciju **dode**, Pariz izdajom  
 from Elba escapes to France comes Paris by-betrayal  
**osvoji** i kralja u bekstvo **otera**.  
 conquers and king to exile force  
 ‘As soon as the Congress began, Napoleon escaped from Elba, came to France, conquered Paris by betrayal and forced the king to exile’

- b. Ova priključenija poraze kao grom vladatelja na Kongresu sobrane...  
 ‘These events struck like thunder the rulers assembled at the Congress...’ (p. 303)

Compare (18) with the sequence of events in (19), given in VO orders. The preceding discourse first relates how the growing army of crusaders enters Asia, and then it proceeds with the elaboration of their conquests. The events are ordered as in (18). The author, however, does not simply state that they took place, but elaborates how the crusaders progressed on their way to Jerusalem, where each town indicates a point in their progress.

- (19) a. Sad se već sa Saldžucima boriti započnu,  
 ‘Now they finally start fighting with the Seljuks,’
- b. *osvoju* **Antiohiju**, *pokore* **gradove** **Tir** **i** **Sidon**. Šetog  
 conquer Antioch defeat towns Tyre and Sidon sixth  
 junija 1099. godine *opaze* **Jerusalim...** 14. julija *udare*  
 June 1099 year see Jerusalem 14<sup>th</sup> July attack  
**na** **grad** **i** drugi **ga** dan osvoje.’  
 on town and second it.cl day conquer  
 ‘conquer Antioch, defeat the towns Tyre and Sidon. On June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1099, they see Jerusalem... On July 14<sup>th</sup> they attack the town and conquer it the second day’ (p. 175)

5.2. MOTIVATION FOR PREDICATE FOCUS MARKING WITH PARTICIPLES. The pragmatic inference of ‘event/situation-orientation’, however, is observed only with verbs in the (historical) present, aorist and imperfect tense. If predicate focus marking only serves the purpose of indicating the event-orientation of the discourse, this would mean that this is the preferred interpretation of the perfect tense, which would be a rather puzzling scenario. There is, however, a possibility to attribute the tense asymmetry to discourse structuring, to some extent. Namely, narrative discourse studies distinguish two basic types of discourse-orientation, and two types of sentences in narratives: ‘narrative sentences’ (which push the story line forward)



and ‘commentaries’ (give details about discourse referents, general information about the situation, describe the place and the conditions under which the events take place, etc.). Hopper (1979) uses the notions ‘foregrounding’ and ‘backgrounding’, and claims that both ‘perspectives’ come with a set of certain linguistic correlates (verbal prefixes, aspect, peripheral vs. non-peripheral positions of the verb, etc.). Given that the perfect tense alternates with the historical present in the exposition of past events, the strong preference for ‘V-/predicate focus’ could be somehow related to the use of perfect tenses in narratives. It has been long shown that the use of historical present is not random (for stylistic effects), but that it is employed at specific points in narratives. Schrifin (1981) argues that in English historical present is used at ‘complicating events’ segments of the narrative, and as such could be said to have a foregrounding role in discourse development. The use of historical present in our corpus is not the same as in English (evident from the difference in the English translations). In addition, the author employs the variation between ‘term focus’ (VO) and ‘predicate-focus’(OV) within the same point in the narrative. Obviously, the mechanism is much more complex to be further speculated on. Still, certain correlations between the ‘narrative orientation’ and tense can be noted. For instance, in chapters dedicated to the description of nations and historical figures, perfect tense is primarily (though not exclusively) used. Chapters dedicated to specific historical events (wars, battles, inventions, etc.) tend to have more historical presents. But, as Hopper and others working on background/foreground distinction in narrative discourse emphasize, linguistic devices only strongly tend to correlate with backgrounding/foregrounding, not that they are uniquely associated with them. Moreover, even if  $OV_{PTC}$  is to be associated with ‘commentary’ parts in the narrative, it is not clear why they should do so via marked predicate focus.

The preference for OV orders with the perfect tense is observed only when the participle is in a relatively low (vP) position in the clause. Recall that participles often undergo fronting to a high position, creating PTC–auxiliary clitic orders, and consequently postverbal objects. A peculiar feature of participle fronting in Slavonic-Serbian is that it marks topic shift in the sentence initial position. This applies even to non-heavy NP subjects. Continued topics (indicated by the use of pronominal subjects) are not marked this way, and S(pron)–PTC–aux. clitic are absent. We have excluded PTC–clitic orders from the count, trying to keep the position of the verb as low (and fixed) as we could, in order to highlight the interpretation of preverbal and postverbal objects in the, more or less, same conditions. This decision, however, has robbed us of the insight into the variation of the position of the participle itself. When PTC-auxiliary orders are taken into the perspective, the distribution of preverbal and postverbal objects in main clauses becomes much more balanced. What then emerges as a descriptive generalization about participles is that they prefer clause peripheral positions: they are either rather high or rather low in the clause. And a possible way to understand predicate focus marking or IS/pragmatic contribution of verb-final participles is to compare them with the IS/pragmatic contributions of fronted participles. This obviously remains something we need to address in future research.

5.3. MOTIVATION FOR PREDICATE FOCUS MARKING IN SUBORDINATE CLAUSES. Even if predicate focus is employed to mark certain peculiarities of the use of tense in narratives, this concern is completely obliterated in subordinate clauses, which strongly tend to be verb-final irrespective of the tense used. Why the ‘predicate focus’ order is used almost as a structural indicator of subordination is yet another difficult question. Most subordinate clauses are discourse subordinated in the sense that main clauses are typically asserted (they update the CG) and that their propositions are more informative/important/relevant than those in the subordinate clause.<sup>14</sup> I have not fully investigated the discourse properties of embedded propositions, but I suspect that it is not very likely that all subordinate clauses in the corpus are indeed always discourse subordinated, i.e., that they are ‘more relevant’ when they are not ‘predicate focus marked’ in VO orders. At this point, it is impossible to hypothesize how predicate focus marking correlates with subordination, and it will remain a problem, which we hope to address in subsequent research. Subordinate clauses also seem to remain the strongest domain for ‘verb-final’ orders, as an informal inspection of newspaper/magazine texts of the same and later periods indicates that V-final orders in subordinate clauses was not completely lost before the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

5.4. SUMMARY. Even though the analysis of verb-final orders in terms of predicate focus marking faces some serious issues/questions,<sup>15</sup> I believe that it is the best way to capture the reasons why NP objects move or do not move in Slavonic-Serbian. Alternatively, we can assume that all OV and, in general, all V-final orders are unmarked, in which case we have two competing OV/VO (head-final and head-initial) grammars.

6. CONCLUSION. The quantitative data presented in this study show that in *Kratka vseмирna istorija*, verb-final orders, here investigated via OV orders, are not completely random and that we can identify linguistic factors giving rise to their frequent use in Slavonic-Serbian. The role of the clause type (subordinate) and the verb type (non-finite, participle) has been shown to be statistically significant in OV orders. The main reason for employing extensive preposing of the postverbal material is of IS/pragmatic nature. However, what makes these orders pragmatically odd from the present-day Serbian perspective is that object and adjunct preposing leading to the ‘verb-final’ order is not motivated by IS marking of terms/discourse participant but predicates (predicate focus marking). The hypothesis of predicate focus marking accounts for why none of the OV or VO orders is associated with a unique interpretation of the object. On the other hand, it opens up a rather difficult question of why predicates need to be focus marked. We have offered some speculations about pragmatic inferences associated with the marked predicate focus, which pertain to narrative discourse structure and development, and the discourse asymmetry between main and subordinate clauses.

<sup>14</sup> Assertion, however, does not always equal new information, and some main clauses can present backgrounded information, and subordinate clauses new information.

<sup>15</sup> Another obvious problem is that OV does not equal ‘verb-final’, as PP adjuncts can be postverbal with OV orders. When a generalized defocusing movement of all postverbal constituents takes place, and when it is ‘partial’ (taking only the complement/object, but not the adjunct PP) is certainly a challenge we need to face in subsequent research.

Finally, let us emphasize that the aim here is not to completely dismiss the influence of language contact or the influence of the prestigious Latin or German. It is perfectly plausible that Latin/German surface structures have prompted more predicate focus marking. If we are to seriously consider the option of *bona fide* syntactic borrowing and view the variation in the head-complement orders as a true instance of syntactic diglossia or competing grammars, we must have a theory of why the ‘two syntaxes’ have different uses. Crucially, this option is free to remain open for any subsequent research.

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РЕД РЕЧИ СА ГЛАГОЛОМ У ФИНАЛНОМ ПОЛОЖАЈУ У СЛАВЕНОСРПСКОМ –  
УЛОГА ЛИНГВИСТИЧКИХ ФАКТОРА

Резиме

У овом раду, на основу квантитативних података из дела *Крајња свемирна исјорија о Георгији Мајарацшевића професора (1831)*, показује се да фреквеност препонираних објеката, која доводи до линеарно финалног положаја глагола зависи примарно од лингвистичких фактора. На основу анализе препонираних и непрепонираних номиналних објеката са глаголским придевом радним (који заједно са помоћним глаголом чини перфекат) и синтетичким глаголом (у презенту, аористу или имперфекту), као статистички значајни фактори за чешћу појаву препонираних објеката уочавају се (а) тип клаузе (зависна) и тип глагола (нелични, тј. глаголски придев радни). У раду се даље истражује до које мере обележавање информацијско-структурних (ИС) значења може објаснити услове под којима се јавља један или други редослед објекта. Примери из корпуса доста јасно показују да, иако ИС фактори постоје, они се не могу директно везати за интерпретацију препонираних елемената. Зато се предлаже да финални положај глагола заправо одражава специфично ИС обележавање предиката – предикатски фокус, а не (нежно) референата/учесника у дискурсу. Мотивацију за обележавање предикатског фокуса није увек лако идентификовати, поготово јер се предикат сматра инхерентно фокусираном. Међутим, на основу уочених разлика у интерпретацији реченица са препонираним и непрепонираним објектима са синтетичким глаголом (историјским презентом или аористом), могући разлог за обележавање предикатског фокуса лежи у прагматичком ефекту који има везе са структуром и развојем наративног дискурса. Код зависних реченица, пак, често обележавање предикатског фокуса може се прагматички довести у везу са дискурсном субординацијом зависних реченица у односу на независне. Висока фреквентност независних реченица са препонираним објектом и глаголом у перфекту представља посебан изазов за хипотезу да ред речи са глаголом у финалном положају служи за обележавања предикатског фокуса. Иако се може уочити извесна повезаност између овог реда речи са структуром наративног дискурса, прави разлог финалног/нефиналног положаја глаголског придева радног (па тако и обележеног предикатског фокуса) нема везе са положајем објекта (препониран/непрепониран), већ са разликом између основне/ниске и високе/изведене позиције самог глаголског придева радног.

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