

MORE INTERESTING FEATURES OF LANGUAGES

LANGUAGE CHANGE OVER TIME

Classical Latin (spoken 600 BCE - 300 CE) is generally considered a free-word order language:

Malam magnam videt puella.
apple-OBJ big-f-s-OBJ sees-3-s girl-SUBJ

“The girl sees the big apple.”

Malam magnam videt puella et bonam.
apple-OBJ big-f-s-OBJ sees-3s girl-SUBJ and good-f-s-OBJ

“The girl sees the nice big apple.”

Malam magnam et bonam videt puella.
apple-OBJ big-f-s-OBJ and good-OBJ sees girl-SUBJ

“The girl sees the nice big apple.”

Malam magnam videt -que puella bona.
apple-OBJ big-f-s-OBJ sees and girl-SUBJ good-f-s-SUBJ

“And the nice girl sees the big apple.”

Paulus videt Petrum
Paul-SUBJ sees-3s Peter-OBJ

“Paul sees Peter.”

Petrus videt Paulum
Peter-SUBJ sees-3s Paul-OBJ

“Peter sees Paul.”

Petrum videt Paulus
Peter-OBJ sees-3s Paul-SUBJ

“Paul sees Peter.”

The language spoken in the northern part of Latin-speaking territory from 300-600 is generally called vulgar Latin (from the Latin word “vulgus” = “population”).

By 800, it's called Old French.

Old French is not a free-word order language. Old French is generally considered VSO.

By 1500, it's called early modern French. Modern French is SVO, and it has some of the strictest word-order rules around.

(Remember that VSO, etc. are just the default (the "unmarked case"). English is SVO, but in a suitable situation (a "marked case"), you can say:

Then came the storm.
etc.

Linguists generally hypothesize that marked forms have a special meaning, occur in a particular situation, etc. The branch of linguistics that investigates this hypothesis is called functional linguistics. Our local expert is Prof. Betty Birner in the English Dept.

But:

In each generation children learn to speak by listening to their parents.

How does this happen?

INDIRECT SPEECH

Direct speech:

Fabula Paulus.
is-speaking-3s Paul-SUBJ

"Paul is speaking."

Indirect speech, simultaneous time:

Dicunt Paulam fabulare.
say-3pl Paul-OBJ to-speak
"They are saying that Paul is speaking".

Dixerunt Paulam fabulare.
said-3pl Paul-OBJ to-speak
"They said that Paul was speaking."

Dicent Paulam fabulare.
will-say-3pl Paul-OBJ to-speak
"They will say that Paul is speaking." (note present tense in English!)

Indirect speech, earlier time:

They say that Paul spoke yesterday. (a parle)

They said that Paul spoke yesterday. (avait parle)
They said that Paul had spoken yesterday.

Later, they will say that Paul spoke yesterday. (avait parle)
Later, they will say that Paul had spoken yesterday.

in Latin: all use "fabulavisse"

Indirect speech, later time:

They say that Paul will speak tomorrow. (parlera)
They said that Paul will speak tomorrow. (parlerait)
They said that Paul would speak tomorrow.
They will say that Paul will speak tomorrow. (parlera)
They will say that Paul is speaking tomorrow.

in Latin, all use "fabulaturum esse"

Interaction with pro-drop:

Fabula.
speaks-3sing
"He/she/it speaks."

Dixit se fabulare.
said-3sing self to-speak
"He/she/it said he/she/it was speaking." (same person)

Dixit eum fabulare.
said-3sing he/she/it to-speak
"He/she/it said he/she/it was speaking." (different person)

NESTED SENTENCES

J'ai dit a Jean d'aller au magasin.
I said-1sing to John to-go to-the store
"I told John to go to the store."

Je voulais que Jean aille au magasin.
I wanted-1sing that John go to-the store.
"I wanted John to go to the store."