**Word Order, Headedness, and Directionality: Omaha-Ponca**

Catherine Rudin  
carudin1@wsc.edu  
Boulder Siouan Syntax Meeting, 2001

*(Author’s note 2009: The following is the handout for my contribution to the session on “word order, headedness, and directionality” at the Siouan Syntax Fest. It consists of a brief sketch of the facts of word order in different types of constituents in Omaha-Ponca, followed by a selection of data. Although it is really more “notes toward a paper” than an actual article, I am making it available in hopes that others will find the data and preliminary analysis useful.)*

**OVERVIEW:**

1. **Word Order in the clause:**
   - Verbal complex is normally rightmost and is the only obligatory element.
   - Verbal complex = V + aux + evidentials etc... quotatives, exclamatives, other “illocutionary” markers ...
   - Other things (nominals, adverbs, etc.) precede verbal complex in no set order: (XP) (XP) (XP) V+(aux)+(clitics)
   - HOWEVER in perhaps 10% of sentences an “XP” follows the verbal complex: (XP)(XP) V+(aux)+(clitics) XP

2. **Word Order in nominals:**
   - Article follows all other elements of nominal phrase.
   - Modifiers including “adjectival” clauses (stative verbs), possessors, quantifiers, and demonstratives follow the noun -- in roughly that order.
   - So the maximal nominal phrase is approximately: [DP [NP N Clause Poss Quant Dem ] D]
   - (All components, including N, are optional.)

3. **Word Order in other phrases**
   - PP is always P-final: [PP [DP ] P]
   - Other? (If there’s a VP, it is V-final ... but is there any evidence for VP??)

4. **Headedness/Directionality**
   - Overall, Omaha-Ponca is quite strongly right-headed. Whether there are phrases whose “normal” shape is not right-headed depends on:
   - (a) how we analyze nominals. Does NP contain more than just N? If so, it appears to be left headed):
     - [DP [NP N Clause Poss Quant Dem ] D]
     - but perhaps each modifier heads its own right-headed projection:
   - (b) whether all the “little stuff” after the verb (auxiliaries, evidentials, etc.) are considered to be heads of various projections (Mood Phrase, Aspect Phrase, ...)*
In two of the major categories (DP and PP), right-headedness is 100% exceptionless. Nothing ever follows D or P within the phrase.

In the other major category, S, right-headedness is the norm but is quite frequently violated (unless we take postverbal constituents to be outside the clause... perhaps a “Topic Phrase” ??) \[ TP [ S \ldots V ] XPT_{topic} \] vs. \[ S \ldots V XP \]

**EXAMPLES AND DISCUSSION:**

1. **clause**

Constituent order within the clause is quite free. Many categories, including all arguments, are expressed morphologically in the verb, and are optional (often omitted) as independent syntactic units.

The Verb is the only obligatory element (in non-eliptical sentences) and is most often clause-final in both main and embedded clauses.

Nominal, Postpositional, and Adverbial phrases normally precede the verbal complex. When more than one such phrase occurs, their order is relatively free, though probably constrained by discourse factors. SOV is the most usual order when both S and O are present, but is not inviolable.

**Clause structure:** \[ [S(XP)* [V\ldots (V(clitics)(aux))] ] \]

**Examples with various choices of (XP):**

[Pahōⁿ ga dīⁿ oⁿ] [iutha gá the] [noⁿžhiⁿ-tⁿ e].
old-days from story this art 3stand=evid
‘This story is from the old days.’

\[ [Ó'ba wiⁿ] [wahōⁿ'fhishìge akⁿa] [shōⁿ ge wiⁿ] [gōⁿtha=i=tⁿ e]. \]
day one Orphan-Boy art horse one 3wants=P=evid
‘One day, Orphan Boy wanted a horse.’

[Údoⁿ] [shkághe].
(be)good 3do
‘You did (something)good.’

[Shé thiⁿkⁿ e] [wiⁿ] ‘i=ga!
that art one give=imp
‘Give that guy one!’

[Gasóⁿthìⁿ] [ábae] athé=ta=ama.
tomorrow hunting 3go=fut=aux
‘They’re going hunting tomorrow.’

[Ti ata niⁿ a?]
house in 2be Q
‘Are you in the house?’

[Tiužhi shti] wákìghthathiⁿ.
family too 3has-his-own 3p

PP + NP_S + V
AdvP + NP_S + NP_O + V
clause + V
NP_{to} + NP_O + V
AdvP + clause? + V
AdvP + V
NP_O + V
‘He has a family too.’

[Gasö°thi°] shi [gahi nikashin°ga ama] [gá ge] o°wo°shi 
AdvP + NP° + NP° + V

tomorrow and chief person art that the 3 ask

‘The council asked me (to do) that tomorrow

[Ó°ba húbe ki] [é t°e] [éc°baha] no°zhi°=ta=mi°k°c
AdvP + NP° + NP° + V
day holy when that art m.c. 1 stand=fut=aux

‘On Sunday I’m going to be the master of ceremonies.’

Certain particles precede or follow the sentence:

(particle) [s[ (XP)* [v. V (clitics)(aux)]]] (particle)

Égithe té dúbá wadó°ba.
finally buffalo some he-see-them
‘Finally he saw some buffalo.’

I°sh’áge ama o°ska two and a half wégithawa=bi=ama.
elder art as-if 3 charge°P=quote
‘Senior citizens apparently are charged 2 1/2 (dollars), they say.’

Although the most usual word order is verb-final, a postverbal constituent occurs in perhaps 10% of sentences in connected discourse. This typically represents a discourse topic, or sometimes an afterthought or clarification. (In the following examples the postverbal phrase is underlined.) Postverbal constituents are probably in a Topic slot outside the whole sentence:

(particle) [s[ (XP)* [v. V (clitics)(aux)]]] (particle) (XP)

Go°shnábe o°gthi°=ta=mi°k°c wéugo°ba. ‘So I’ll live with dirty windows’

so be-dirty I-live=fut=I-aux window

(conversation about washing windows; wéugo°ba is a well established topic)

Watháko° ná=i t°e di shi=the ihithishi a, Haskell?
gambling go=P when arrive=evid? 2 feed°Q Haskell
‘When you went to gamble, did they feed you when you arrived, (at) Haskell?

(first utterance of a conversation; no topic established; Haskell added for clarification.)

No°gthéze ama é wathit°b°o° sho° gághé the di, ó°ba thizé=no°=i=t°e égo°=i 3 e di awak°etá shté
N. art that 3 work finish 3 do when day 3 take=usu=P=evid thus=P when where ever
go° bthe=no°=mo°, wathit°b°o°=m=azhi t°e di.
so I go=usu=aux 1 work=1=neg when

‘When No°gthéze is done working, on her day off, when it’s like that, I go anywhere (with her), if I’m not working.’

(afterthought?)

Égithe duá=t°e nidethe=t°e, ké t°u°ga.
finally this=art ready=evid turtle big
‘Eventually it was ready (cooked), the snapping turtle.’

(reintroducing topic/reminding -- the turtle hasn’t been mentioned in a while)
Question words (and other focused elements?) most often immediately precede the verb:

Zhi'gá thi'k'he i'i dádo'ndó'ndó be a?  ‘What does the baby see?’
small  art  what  see  Q

Mo'k'ó' sabe ebé athi't'í a?  ‘Who brought the coffee?’
medicine  black  who  has  come  Q

Mó'sho'k'he águdi níze a?  ‘Where did you get those feathers?’
feather  art  where  get  Q

However, other positions are possible for question words too:

l dádo'wáthat'gaha gthí'no?  ‘What’s on the table?’
what  table  on  top  sit

Nominal subordinate clauses usually precede the main clause, but may also follow it:

Ó'wo'shigthe amá wéamo'xa=b=azhi=no', i'dádo'o'gó'tha=i t'hé
server  art  ask=want=habitual  what  want=art

‘The servers never ask us what (i.e. which piece of food) we want.’

2. nominal

A nominal core (NP?) can combine with an article to make a determiner phrase (DP), which in turn can combine with a quantifier (including numerals) to make a quantifier phrase (QP). DP and QP are head-final, and headed by a functional element drawn from a closed morphological class. A rough template of possible constituents and their relative order within ‘NP’ is:

[ NP (noun) + (clause) + (other modifiers) + (demonstrative ) ]

demonstratives and quantifiers also appear in other positions; it’s messy.

(See my other Boulder Siouan Syntax-fest paper for details and examples: The NP: structure, case, nominalization, incorporation, and relative clauses: Omaha-Ponca; C. Rudin, 2001 ms.)

3. other phrases

a. PP

PPs are P-final (postpositional); a postposition follows a noun or other nominal phrase (including clauses, etc.).

(a)di  ‘in/at/on/to’  [ti] ádi  ‘in the house’
    [tiútano’] di  ‘in the yard/street’
    [uxpúzhe k'hé] di  ‘in the cupboard’
    [wa’u zhi’gá thi’k'hé] di  ‘at the old woman(‘s place)’

(a)ta  ‘to/toward’  [Macy] ata  ‘to Macy’ ([mési ata])
    [uthiwi’i ti k'hé] ta  ‘to the store’
dit'oⁿ ‘from’
[umó³thíⁿ'ka házhi t’h’e] dit'oⁿ ‘since last year’
[tiúzhi wiwita t’e] dit'oⁿ ‘(it is) from my family’
[wabthí[bⁿ] t’h’e] dit'oⁿ ‘since I’ve been working’
(a)t’oⁿ ‘as far as’
[[to’wo’gtho’n] t’oⁿ] bthe ‘I’m going to town.’
(a)doⁿ ‘during’
[hóⁿ] doⁿ ‘at night’
[o’ba] doⁿ ‘in the daytime’

other postpositions include:

(a)tathishoⁿ ‘up to’
[tat’oⁿ] ‘from’
(a)doⁿ ‘because of’

thu ‘in/at/on’
(a)ha ‘to/from/in … places’
goⁿ ‘in … wise, like …’

b. AdvP

The only multi-word adverbials I know of (i.e. ones where it makes sense to talk about “word order”) are adverbial clauses. These end with an adverbial subordinator:

egoⁿ I ‘having’
egoⁿ II ‘so’
adoⁿ ‘therefore’
ki=(zh) ‘if/when’
t’oⁿ/thoⁿ ‘when’ -- also t’edi ?? or is this t’e ‘when + di ‘at’?

examples:
Ké thi’kⁿ'é t’étha egoⁿ, gá thi’kⁿ é bthátʰ=e=mi’kʰ.e. ‘Having killed the turtle, [he said]’I will turtle art he’-killed- it having this art I eat- it=fut=aux eat this.’

On’kⁿ’h’ega (egoⁿ) at’i=m=azhi. ‘I was sick so I didn’t come.’
I-sick so I-arrive-here=I=neg

Ato’be goⁿ ubthá=ta=mi’kʰ.e. ‘Having seen it, I’m going to tell about it.’
1see having 1tell=fut=aux

O’zhi’ga t’e di…
1small when

‘When I was small…’

Pahó’ga hi t’e di pi’oⁿ. ‘When they came the first time, they fixed it.’
first 3arrive-here when 3repair

Mítho’mo’shi o’wó’n’thatᵇ=a=i, mó’ze iutha kí. ‘We were eating dinner when the phone rang.’
noon 4eat=P telephone when

Agthí kí ebé shí atʰ=i=ʰ’e. ‘When I came home somebody had been there.’
1arrive-home when who soever 3arrive-here=P=evid

“Before” is expressed with a negative “when” clause:
O\textsuperscript{\textdegree}wö\textdegree that\textdegree a=b=azhi t\textdegree e di gá t\textdegree h\textdegree thishtó\textdegree théthewo\textdegree
we-eat=P=neg art when this art finish is-necessary?  ‘Before we eat, this has to get finished.’

*The adverbial clause normally precedes the main clause, but can also follow it:* 

Go\textdegree wá\textdegree ú thi\textdegree itho\textdegree ba uthúha=b=azhi=t\textdegree c, uthúbini thé t\textdegree édi.
well woman art never he-follow-her=P=neg=evid she-go-around? she-go when
‘He didn’t follow the woman after she went around it [the church].’