

**WOPIS**  
**Word Order, Prosody and Information Structure:**  
**an interim report on the prefield in Swedish (and Dutch)**

Annie Zaenen

joint work with Elisabet Engdahl and Filippa Lindahl

Gothenburg, May 2019

**Outline**

- Proposed generalization about the prefield in Germanic;
- Information Structure notions;
- Rhemes in Swedish;
- Topics in Swedish;
- Contrast in the prefield;
- Beyond prefield DPs;
- Final Remarks

**Configurationality**

- (1) John saw Mary.  
Mary saw John.
- (2) Der Junge sah den Mann.  
Den Mann sah der Junge.  
*The boy saw the man*

**What about Swedish (subjects)**

- Claim 1: Swedish is an SVO language
- Claim 2: The difference between Swedish and English is due to V2: when something else is in first position, the subject is immediately after the tensed verb.
- (3) Eftersom solen skiner **öppnar** sig mitt i skogen **en idyll**. (Claesson, Stig: Vem älskar Yngve Frej: 136)  
*'Since the sun is shining unfolds itself in the midst of the forest an idyll.'*
- Claim 3: The subject always precedes the objects
- (4) Det hade hänt honom **något konstigt** igår. (Zaenen et al. (2017))  
EXPL had happened him something strange yesterday  
*'Something strange had happened to him yesterday.'*
- Claim 4: SVO is the "unmarked" order that works in all circumstance (for all Information Structure assignments to the constituents).
- (5) Q Anything happened this morning? (From Bohnacker (2010))  
A1 #En massa folk har ringt till dig.

*Lots of people have called (to) you.*  
A2 Det har ringt en massa folk till dig.  
*There have called lots of people (to) you.*

### Subjects in the prefield are topics?

- (6) Maria kom in i baren. Jan reste sig och hälsade på henne. Hon kysste honom på kinden.  
*Mary entered the bar. John got up to greet her. She gave him a kiss.*
- (7) Mary arbetar hårt. Igår hade hon en extra jobbig dag.  
Mary works hard. Yesterday she had a specially busy day.

### Elements in the prefield are topics?

(Examples from (Engdahl, 2018))

- (8) From a discussion about future careers:  
a. så någon logoPED blir det inte av mig  
*so some speech-pathologist becomes it never of me*  
'so a speech paTHOlogist, they'll never turn me into'
- (9) What do you think about this procedure? (Radio interview 2012-08-31)  
a. PINSamt tycker jag att det är  
*embarrassing think I that it is*  
'I think it is emBARrassing.'
- (10) Toen we de deur openen, kwam Jan binnen.  
*When we opened the door, John came in.*

### Information Structure notions

Coherence and informativeness against an assumed common ground between the speaker (writer) and the hearer (reader).

- (11) a. Mary likes tea. John went skiing.  
b. Mary likes tea. Mary likes tea.
- Topic/Theme/...: what the sentence is about, the file card on which the new information will be entered ((Reinhart, 1981)).
  - Rheme/Focus/...: new info: answer to wh-question
  - Background: things that are neither

### Rhemes

- (12) a. What did Jan do?  
Han [<sub>r</sub> reparerade Bilen].
- b. What did Jan repair?  
Han reparerade [<sub>r</sub> Bilen].  
*He repaired the car.*

- (13) a. What did John do to the car?  
 Han [<sub>r</sub> repaRErade] den.  
*He repaired it.*
- b. Who repaired the car?  
 (Det gjorde) [<sub>r</sub> JAN].  
*That did John.*
- (14) What happened?  
 [<sub>r</sub> Min DAtor har pajat].  
*My computer has broken down.*
- (15) What happened?  
 [<sub>r</sub> JAN reparerade Bilen].  
*John repaired the car.*

### Can the rheme occur in the prefield?

- (16) Q. What did Fred eat? (inspired by (Vallduví & Engdahl, 1996))  
 A1. Hij heeft [<sub>r</sub> Bonen] gegeten.  
*He has eaten beans.*  
 A2. [<sub>r</sub> Bonen].  
*Beans*  
 A3. ??[<sub>r</sub> BOnen] heeft hij gegeten.  
*Beans he has eaten.*  
 A4. [[<sub>r</sub> BOnen] heeft hij zeker gegeten.  
*Beans he has certainly eaten.*  
 A5. [<sub>r</sub> Bonen] denk ik.  
*Beans I think.*  
 A6. [<sub>r</sub>BOnen] denk ik dat hij gegeten heeft.  
*Beans I think that he has eaten.*
- (17) Q. What did he buy?  
 A1. Han köpte [<sub>r</sub> en bil].  
*He bought a car.*  
 A2. [<sub>r</sub> En bil].  
*A car*  
 A3. ??[<sub>r</sub> En bil] köpte han.  
*A car bought he.*  
 A4. [<sub>r</sub> En bil] köpte han visst.  
*A car bought he probably.*  
 A5. [<sub>r</sub> En bil], tror jag.  
*A car I think.*  
 A6. [<sub>r</sub> En bil] tror jag han köpte.  
*A car I think he bought*
- (18) Q. Who did you see yesterday? (from (Erteschik-Shir, 2018))  
 a. A1. \*Mette så jeg i går. (Danish)  
*Mette saw I yesterday*

- b. A2. Jeg så Mette i går.  
*I saw Mette yesterday.*
- (19) a. Hej, Eva heter jag och jag ska vara er guide idag.  
b. *Hi my name is Eva and I will be your guide today.*  
c. #Dag, Eva heet ik en ik zal vandaag jullie gids zijn.  
d. Dag, ik heet Eva en ik zal vandaag jullie gids zijn.
- (20) Q. Wat heb je gisteren gedaan?  
*What have you done yesterday?*
- a. A1. (Ik) las een boek.  
*(I) read a book.*
- b. A2. Een boek heb ik gelezen, de hele namiddag!  
*A book have I read, the whole afternoon.*
- c. A3. Een boek gelezen (?heb ik).  
*A book read (?have I)*
- d. A4. Gelezen (?heb ik) (\*een boek).  
*Read have I a book.*
- (21) Q. Vad gjorde du i går?
- a. A1. (Jag) läste en bok.  
b. A2. #En bok läste jag (hela eftermiddagen).  
c. A3. (Jag) läste ut boken. (finished the book)  
d. A4. #Boken läste jag ut.

(Fanselow & Lenertová, 2011) claim that these are possible in German.

### Contrastive rhemes?

- (22) What kind of birds did you see?  
Een spech hebben we gezien, en een zwaluw en een roodborstje!  
En 'hackspett såg vi, och en 'svala och en 'rödhake.  
*a woodpecker saw we and a swallow and a robin.*
- (23) Q. Which European countries did you visit?  
A. Till och med Luxemburg besökte vi. (Bloggmix14)  
(All of them, big or small.) Even Luxemburg we visited.
- (24) a. Till och med Photoshop finns det alternativ till (Bloggmix10)  
*even Photoshop exist EXPL alternatives to*  
'There are alternatives even to Photoshop.'  
b. Till och med Hallelujah gör han med total övertygelse. (GP12)  
*even Hallelujah does he with total conviction*  
'Even Hallelujah he does with complete conviction.'
- (25) Q: Vad skrev han upp i sin anteckningsbok?  
A1. Varena bok han läste.  
*'Every book he read'*  
A2. Varena bok han läste tror jag han skrev upp där.  
*'Every book he read I think he wrote up there.'*

- (26) Q: What did he note down in his notebook?  
 A1. Ieder boek dat hij gelezen heeft.  
*'Every book he read'*  
 A2. Ieder boek dat hij gelezen heeft denk ik dat hij daar noteerde.  
*'Every book he read I think that he wrote up there.'*  
 A3. ??Ieder boek dat hij gelezen heeft noteerde hij daar.  
*'Every book he read he wrote up there.'*

Notions of contrasts from Repp (2015)

1. Restricted, contextually clearly identifiable set of alternatives: 'John, Pete and Josie all offered help. I asked John.' John would be marked for contrast (Kiss (1998))
2. Alternatives must be in the sentence.
3. Substitution of alternative must create false statement (e.g. Neeleman & Vermeulen (2012))
4. Alternatives always contrast, simply by being different (alternative semantics) ((Vallduví & Vilkuna, 1998), also Krifka (2007))
5. Interlocutors belief system: unexpected, remarkable (Frey (2006))

### Topics

Vallduví & Engdahl (1996) give the following Dutch example of a prefield topic:

- (27) Q. What about the veggie dishes? What did Fred do to them?  
 A1. Fred heeft [<sub>t</sub> de bonen] [<sub>r</sub> opgegeten].  
*Fred has eaten the beans.*  
 A2. [<sub>t</sub> De bonen] heeft Fred [<sub>r</sub> opgegeten].  
*The beans has Fred eaten.*
- (28) Q Var är bilen?  
 a. A1. Jag ställde den i gaRAget.  
*I put it in garage.DEF*  
 b. A2 Den ställde jag i gaRAget.  
*It put I in garage.DEF*
- (29) Q. Where is the car?  
 a. A1. I put it in the GARage.  
 b. A2. \*It I put in the GARage.  
 c. A3. #THAT I put in the GARage.
- (30) Q Waar is de auto?  
 a. A1. Ik heb hem in de gaRAge gezet.  
*I have it.ACC in the garage put*  
 b. A2. Die heb ik in de gaRAge gezet.  
*That have I in the garage put*  
 c. A3. ??Hem heb ik in de gaRAge gezet.  
*It.ACC have I in the garage put*  
 d. A4. Hij staat in de gaRAge.  
*It is in the garage.*

- (31) Marie heeft Jan een boek gegeven. Het heeft mooie illustraties.  
*Mary gave John a book. It has beautiful illustrations.*
- (32) Ställde jag i gaRAget.  
Heb ik in de gaRAge gezet.  
*Put I in the garage.*
- (33) Q: Berätta något om Johns senaste bok.  
A: Ja, den boken borde alla läsa.
- (34) Q. Vertel me over Jans senaste bok.  
A1. Dat (boek) zou iedereen moeten lezen.  
*That (book) should everybody have to read.*  
A2. #Het boek zou iedereen moeten lezen.  
*The book should everybody have to read.*  
A3. Iedereen zou dat/?het (boek) moeten lezen.  
*Everybody should that/the book have to read.*

### How do non stressed topics in Swedish relate to the preceding discourse?

#### Rheme-topic chaining

(61% of the 150 examples investigated by (Engdahl & Lindahl, 2014) )

- (35) Young man, Villberga (NDC):  
a. En kompis till mig hyrde en KÅK<sub>1</sub> [...]  
*a friend to me rented a house*  
b. fast *den*<sub>1</sub> tror jag de har RIVit *t*<sub>1</sub> nu den kåken<sub>1</sub>  
*though it think I they have pulled-down now that house*
- (36) A reporter is interviewing a meteorologist about a new handbook about clouds and has just asked about the white tracks made by airplanes (Swedish Radio 2017-03-24)  
a. är det MOLN<sub>1</sub> tycker du?  
*is it cloud think you*  
'Do you think it is a cloud?'  
b. ja *det*<sub>1</sub> måste man ju SÄga att det ÄR *t*<sub>1</sub>  
*yes it must one PRT say that it is*  
'Yes, you have to say that it is (a cloud).'

#### Topic-topic chaining

(29% in Engdahl & Lindahl (2014))

- (37) Interviewer asks a young man in Skinnskatteberg (NDC): Do you have any contact with those who did their military service at the same time as you?  
a. ja det var två andra sjukvårdare. **De** var från Fagersta så *dem* har jag  
*yes there were two other paramedics they were from Fagersta so them have I*  
ganska bra kontakt med  
*pretty good contact with.*

### Clear cases of contrast

- (38) a. *BIlen* ställde jag i gaRAget.  
*The car put I in garage.DEF*  
b. men *CYkeln* är i TRÄdgården.  
*but the bike is in the garden.*
- (39) a. *De AUto* heb ik in de gaRAge gezet.  
*The car have I in the garage put*  
b. maar *de FIETS* is in de TUIN.  
*but the bike is in the garden.*

Another possible context is (27) and the following: There are some vegetarian left-overs in the fridge, beans, ratatouille, tofu.

- (40) A: Vad åt Fred?  
*What did Fred eat?*  
B1. (Han åt visst) BÖnorna.  
*(He apparently ate) the beans.*  
B2. BÖnorna (åt han visst).  
*Beans (ate he apparently).*  
B3. BÖnorna (åt han visst) och kanske lite rataTOUILLE.  
*Beans (ate he apparently) and maybe a bit of ratatouille.*
- (41) Q Which languages do your children speak?  
A1. NEDerlands spreken ze met MIJ en ENGels (spreken ze) met hun VAdEr.  
A2. Ze spreken NEDerlands met MIJ en ENGels met hun VAdEr.  
A3. Met MIJ spreken zij NEDerlands en met hun VAdEr ENGels.  
*They speak Dutch with me and English with their father.*
- (42) Q Vad talar Linda för språk?  
A1. Hon talar ENGelska med sin PAPpa och SVENska med sin MAMma.  
A2. Med sin PAPpa talar hon ENGelska och med sin MAMma (talar hon) SVENska.  
A3. ENGelska talar hon med sin PAPpa och SVENska med sin MAMma

from Erteschik-Shir (2018):

- (43) Hvem mødte du i går, Mette eller Hans? (Danish)  
*Who met you yesterday, Mette or Hans?*  
a. Mette mødte jeg i går, Hans møder jeg nok i morgen.  
*Mette met I yesterday, Hans meet I probably tomorrow.*  
b. Jeg mødte Mette i går. Jeg møder nok Hans i morgen.

Intonation: L\*H (/) on the topic followed by a H\*L (\) on the rheme.

- (44) Q Vad talar barnen för språk?  
*Which language do the kids speak?*  
a. /MaRIa talar \ENGelska och /ANna talar \SVENska  
*Mary speaks English and Anna speaks Swedish.*

- (45) Vad talar Linda för språk?  
 a. Hon talar /ENGelska med sin \PAPpa och /SVENska med sin /MAMma.  
 b. Med sin /PAPpa talar hon \ENGelska och med sin /MAMma (talar hon) \SVENska.  
 c. /ENGelska talar hon med sin \PAPpa och /SVENska med sin \MAMma.
- (46) The staff here is really excellent. Whenever one needs them, they are there.  
 a. Den /HAUSmeister habe ich gerade auf der \ TREPpe getroffen. Er hat mir über die Neuigkeiten des geplanten Umzug berichtet. ...  
 b. De /porTIER ben ik zo juist op de \TRAP tegen gekomen en hij heeft me het laatste nieuws vertel over de geplande veranderingen.  
*The janitor have I just now found in the staircase. He has talked to me about the latest planned removal...*

Hendricks (2002)

”Non monotonic Anaphora Hypothesis: Linkhood (marked by L+H\* accent in English) serves to signal non-monotonic anaphora. If an expression is a link(= contrastive topic, AZ), then its discourse referent Y is anaphoric to an antecedent discourse referent X such that  $X \not\subseteq Y$ .”

- (47) Last night I went out to buy the picnic supplies ...  
 a. I decided to get beer first.  
 b. I decided to get the beer first.  
 c. (The) Beer, I decided to get first.
- (48) Jon körde in bilen in garaget och gick in.  
 Jan parkeerde de auto in de garage en ging binnen.  
*John drove his car into the garage and entered.*  
 #**Jackan** hängde han upp i hallen och gick sen ut i köket  
 #**Zijn jas** hing hij op in the gang en hij ging naar de keuken.  
*His jacket he hung up the hallway and he went to the kitchen ....*
- (49) a. John has a big library, **every book in it** he summarized in his notebook. OK  
 b. John has a big library, **every book he reads** he summarizes in his notebook. a bit odd  
 c. John is a big reader, he has a big library and **every book he reads** he summarize in his notebook. OK
- (50) a. John har en stor boksamling. **Varenda bok i den** har han skrivit upp i sin anteckningsbok.  
 b. John har en stor boksamling. **Varenda bok han läser** skriver han upp i sin anteckningsbok.  
 c. John läser mycket och har en stor boksamling. **Varenda bok han läser** skriver han upp i sin anteckningsbok.
- (51) Jan parkeerde de auto in de garage en ging binnen.  
*John drove his car into the garage and entered.*  
 a. **Zijn jas** hing hij op in de gang, **zijn pantoffels** vond hij naast zijn zetel, **zijn dagelijkse biertje** nam hij uit the ijskast.  
*His jacket he hung up in the hallway, his slippers he found next to his armchair, his daily beer he got out of the fridge.*  
 (Een kalme, comfortable avond lag in het verschiet.)



( *A calm and comfortable evening was beckoning.* )  
 b. **Zijn pantoffels** stonden naast de deur. Hij trok ze aan.  
*His slippers stood next to the door. He put them on.*

To sum up this section: we have number of hypotheses about direct objects/arguments of the main predicate in the prefield:

- For non stressed topics: as far as their antecedents go, they should obey the constraints on personal/demonstrative pronouns;
- For the contrastive elements in the prefield: they need to find an overarching QUD that their various components are the partial answers to. We need to see how far we have to relax Hendricks's hypothesis;
- For the non contrastive/non stressed rheme: it might not occur in the prefield in all varieties of Scandinavian we need to investigate the language variation more.

## Beyond DPs

### Predicative elements and argument adjuncts

- (52) From a discussion about future careers:  
 a. så någon logoped blir det inte av mig  
*so some speech-pathologist becomes it never of me*  
 'so a speech paTHOlogist, they'll never turn me into'
- (53) What do you think about this procedure? (Radio interview 2012-08-31)  
 a. PINsamt tycker jag att det är  
*embarrassing think I that it is*  
 'I think it is emBARrassing.'
- (54) Vem gjorde vad?  
*Who did what?*  
 a. Eva DISkade och ANDers TORKade.  
*Eva washed and Anders dried*  
 b. DISkade gjorde Eva och TORKade gjorde ANDers.  
*washed did Eva and dried did Anders*
- (55) Sport commentator on Swedish Radio:  
 a. Olsson kom på FJÄRde plats, VANN gjorde **André Myhrer**  
*Olsson came on fourth place, win did André Myhrer*
- (56) En som har spikat sina planer är Emma Fransson som förlängt sitt kontrakt med Sävehof  
*one who has nailed her plans is E F who (has) extended her contract with Sävehof*  
 och STANNar där ytterligare en säsong  
*and stays there additional one season*  
 LÄMnar Sävehof gör däremot den danska spelaren NN som ....  
*leaves Sävehof does 'dagegen' the Danish player NN who ...*

### Adjectives modifying the subject

- (57) Furious, she left the room.
- (58) ... Al wat van zijn bezoek overbleef was een raadselachtige ring die ze onder haar bed verstopt had.  
*The only thing left from his visit was a mysterious ring that she had hidden under her bed.*  
**Terneergeslagen** ging Agnes naar de keuken. ...  
*Depressed, Agnes went into the kitchen ...*

### Stage topics and other 'restrictors'

Erteschik-Shir (2007)

- (59) About coffee I don't know very much but this I know:  
 a. **In Europe**, people didn't drink *it* in the Middle Ages.  
 b. **In Middle Ages**, people didn't drink *it* in Europe.
- (60) Mary is a great roommate. **Yesterday** *she* again did all the dishes.
- (61) **Waarschijnlijk** zal *Jan* te laat zijn.  
*Probably, John will be late.*
- (62) **Volgens mij** is *dit voorstel* zinloos.  
*In my opinion, this proposal doesn't make sense.*

### Final remarks

- Contrary to English, Swedish is not a SVO language;
- Swedish is not a topic first language;
- Subjects in first position have different properties from other elements in that position, at least in Dutch, see examples (51), (31), in Swedish?
- Swedish and Dutch are both X V ... languages but
- Swedish and Dutch do not treat the prefield in exactly the same way, see (19) and (20)

## References

- Bohnacker, Ute. 2010. The clause-initial position in L2 Swedish declaratives: word order variation and discourse pragmatics. *Nordic Journal of Linguistics* 33. 105–143.
- Engdahl, Elisabet. 2018. How to start a sentence in Swedish – in comparison with German.
- Engdahl, Elisabet & Filippa Lindahl. 2014. Preposed object pronouns in mainland Scandinavian. *Working Papers in Scandinavian Syntax* 92. 1–32.
- Erteschik-Shir, Nomi. 2007. *Information Structure. The Syntax-Discourse Interface*. Oxford University Press.
- Erteschik-Shir, Nomi. 2018. Topics and Topicalization in Danish.
- Fanselow, Gisebert & Denisa Lenertová. 2011. Left peripheral Focus: Mismatches between Syntax and Information Structure. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 29(1).

- Frey, Werner. 2006. Contrast and movement to the German prefield. In Valéria Molnár & Susanne Winkler (eds.), *The Architecture of Focus*, 235–264. Mouton de Gruyter.
- Hendricks, Herman. 2002. Links without locations: from cards to boxes. In Fritz Hamm & Thomas Ede Zimmermann (eds.), *Semantics*, Linguistische Berichte, .
- Kiss, Katalin. 1998. Identificational focus versus information focus. *Language* 74(2).
- Krifka, Manfred. 2007. Basic notions of Information Structure. In Caroline Féry, Gisbert Fanselow & Manfred Krifka (eds.), *Interdisciplinary studies on information structure*, .
- Neeleman, Ad & Reiko Vermeulen. 2012. The Syntactic Expression of Information Structure. In Ad Neeleman & Reiko Vermeulen (eds.), *the syntax of topic, focus and contrast: An interface-based approach*, .
- Reinhart, Tanya. 1981. Pragmatics and linguistics: An analysis of sentence topics. *Philosophica* 27(1). 53–94.
- Repp, Sophie. 2015. Contrast: Dissecting an Elusive Information-structural Notion and its Role in Grammar. In Caroline Féry & Shinichiro Ishihara (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Information Structure*, Oxford University Press.
- Vallduví, Enric & Elisabet Engdahl. 1996. The linguistic realization of information packaging. *Linguistics* 34(3). 459–519.
- Vallduví, Enric & Maria Vilkuna. 1998. On Rheme and Kontrast. In Peter Culicover & Louise McNally (eds.), *The Limits of Syntax*, Syntax and Semantics, Academic Press.
- Zaenen, Annie, Elisabet Engdahl & Joan Maling. 2017. Subject properties in presentational sentences in Icelandic and Swedish. In Victoria Rosén & Koenraad De Smedt (eds.), *The very model of a modern linguist* BeLLS 8, 260–281.

## Corpora

*Korp* <https://spraakbanken.gu.se/korp/>

*Nordic Dialect Corpus* <http://tekstlab.uio.no/nota/scandiasyn/>