

Utterance Finality and Historical Linguistics

Hans Henrich Hock
hhhock@illinois.edu

The crosslinguistic tendency toward utterance-final falling intonation is well known. In verb-final languages, this tendency interacts with the crosslinguistic tendency of verbs to be prosodically less prominent than nouns in the same prosodic domain. The interaction, in turn, has led to the claim that verbs in verb-final languages are prosodically especially weak (e.g. Ladd 1996).

In this presentation I show that accepting the special prosodic weakness of verbs in verb-final languages makes it possible to account for a variety of developments that target finite verbs in early Indo-European, including apocope of final *-i* that is less restricted than in nouns (Italic and Baltic-Slavic) and accent retraction or loss in verbs, but not in nouns (Sanskrit and Greek). Parallels are found in Finnish apocope of *-e* in finite verbs and accent retraction in Modern Persian.

The fact that Sanskrit accent retraction/loss is limited to main clauses is explainable in terms of the fact that main-clause verbs are utterance-final in canonical order, but dependent clauses are not. Subsequently, verb accent is grammaticalized as a marker of DC clauses. This, too, is paralleled in Modern Persian, but grammaticalization proceeds along somewhat different lines. I conclude by showing that the Sanskrit and especially the Modern Persian parallels make it possible to explain the puzzling fact that in Modern Kashmiri, V2 is restricted to main clauses and right-peripheral COMP clauses, but is not found in prototypically left-adjoined relative and adverbial dependent clauses.