

German Clause Structure

This assignment concerns the syntax of (standard) German clause structure. Assume as background the set of hypotheses we have built up in the course so far: the principles of phrasal projection (merge), selection, agreement and movement.

1 Word order in embedded clauses

Consider first the order of elements in embedded sentences, which are the bracketed constituents introduced by the complementizer *daß* ‘that’ in the following examples.

- (1) a. Ich glaube daß [Fritz ein Buch über die Liebe gelesen hat]
I believe that [Fritz a book about the love read has]
‘I believe that Fritz has read a book about love.’
b. Die Polizei hat mir gesagt daß [Fritz ein Auto klaun soll]
the police has me said that [Fritz a car steal should]
‘The police said to me that Fritz should steal a car.’
c. Ich glaube daß [die Kinder nicht nach Berlin gefahren sind]
I believe that [the children not to Berlin travelled are]
‘I believe that the children did not go to Berlin.’

Adopt the following additional assumptions about German syntax:

- *daß* is a lexical item of category C (for complementizer), which selects a sentence and projects a CP, and that sentence embedding verbs like *glauben* ‘believe’ and so forth select for a complement of category C.
- The negation marker *nicht* and the adverbs *nie wieder* ‘never again’ in (6b) and *jetzt* ‘now’ in (7b) attach to the immediate left of a VP. That is: they have VP sisters. Don’t worry about whether they are selected by Vs or whether they select for Vs themselves; just assume that they can be taken as ‘markers’ of the left edge of a VP.

Starting from the assumption that the word order patterns seen in embedded sentences are basic (not derived by phrasal movement), develop an answer to the following question: how can we account for the internal structure of these sentences given the assumptions about the lexicon and the generative component that we have made so far? Consider only the structure of embedded sentences at this point.

NB: If you know German, you will know that other orderings of the major clausal constituents are also possible. Ignore these for the moment, and assume that they derive from the patterns in (1) by movement operations.

2 Word order in matrix clauses

Word order patterns in matrix (non-embedded) clauses are very different, as illustrated by the sentences in (2)-(5).

- (2) a. Ich habe dieses Auto in München geklaut.
I have this car in Munich stolen
‘I stole this car in Munich.’

- b. Dieses Auto habe ich in München geklaut. (synonymous with (2a))
 - c. In München habe ich dieses Auto geklaut. (synonymous with (2a))
- (3)
- a. *Ich dieses Auto habe in München geklaut.
 - b. *Ich in München dieses Auto habe geklaut.
 - c. *Ich in München habe dieses Auto geklaut.
 - d. *In München dieses Auto habe ich geklaut.
- (4)
- a. Am Abend geht man zum Weihnachtsmarkt.
in-the evening goes one to-the Christmas-market
'In the evening people go to the Christmas market.'
 - b. Man geht am Abend zum Weihnachtsmarkt. (synonymous with (4a))
 - c. Zum Weihnachtsmarkt geht man am Abend. (synonymous with (4a))
- (5)
- a. *Man am Abend geht zum Weihnachtsmarkt.
 - b. *Man am Abend zum Weihnachtsmarkt geht.

Using the theoretical devices we have so far assembled, construct an analysis of word order in matrix clauses in German. Consider especially the data in (6), and make sure that your proposal handles it.

- (6)
- a. Gesagt daß Peter reich ist hat sie nicht.
said that Peter rich is has she not.
'She has not said that Peter is rich.'
 - b. Gesprochen mit ihm hat sie nie wieder.
spoken with him has she never again
'She never spoke to him again.'

3 Questions

Some basic observations about how questions work in German are presented in (7) and (8). They should provide an important clue about how to construct your analysis. The analysis you have developed for non-question matrix sentences should predict the patterns you see here. If it does, explain how; if it does not, revise it so that it does.

- (7)
- a. Was machen sie?
what make they
'What are they making?'
 - b. Womit schreibt sie jetzt?
with-what writes she now
'What is she writing with now?'
 - c. Warum muß ich sterben?
why must I die
'Why must I die?'
- (8)
- a. *Warum ich muß sterben?
 - b. *Warum sterben muß ich?
 - c. *Womit jetzt schreibt sie?
 - d. *Was sie machen?

4 'Matrix patterns' in certain embedded clauses

The word order patterns seen in the previous sections are for the most part restricted to matrix clauses. However, there is a small group of verbs (sometimes called 'bridge verbs') which allow the matrix pattern in their complement clauses. Two such verbs are *glauben* 'believe' and *weißen* 'know', as illustrated by the data in (9) and (10).

- (9) a. Ich weiß daß die Kinder das Brot gegessen haben.
I know that the children the bread eaten have
'I know that the children have eaten the bread.'
- b. Ich weiß die Kinder haben das Brot gegessen. (synonymous with (9a))
- c. Ich weiß das Brot haben die Kinder gegessen. (synonymous with (9a))
- (10) a. Sie glaubte daß die Kinder den Film gesehen haben.
she believed that the children the film seen have
'She believed that the children had seen the film.'
- b. Sie glaubte die Kinder haben den Film gesehen. (synonymous w/(10a))
- c. Sie glaubte den Film haben die Kinder gesehen. (synonymous w/(10a))

But the sentences in (11) are completely ungrammatical.

- (11) a. *Ich weiß daß die Kinder haben das Brot gegessen.
b. *ich weiß daß das Brot haben die Kinder gegessen.
c. *Sie glaubte daß die Kinder haben den Film gesehen.
d. *Sie glaubte daß den Film haben die Kinder gesehen.

Use these observations to construct an argument for or against the proposal you have developed. If the observations argue against your analysis, how could you revise it to account for these facts?

5 Separable prefix verbs (extra credit)

Finally, consider the implications of the following facts for your proposal. German has a large class of verbs which are similar to *understand* or *withstand* in English, in that they seem to consist of a prepositional affix plus a verbal stem. The verbs *anrufen* (*an* + *rufen* 'call on the phone') and *ausziehen* (*aus* + *ziehen* 'pull out') are typical examples. Consider the following data (all examples use these two verbs).

- (12) a. Jetzt zieht er den Nagel aus.
Now STEM he the nail AFFIX
'Now he is pulling out the nail.'
- b. Mein Vater ruft mich von Zeit zu Zeit an.
my father STEM me from time to time AFFIX
'My father calls me on the phone every so often.'
- (13) a. *Jetzt auszieht er den Nagel.
b. *Mein Vater anruft mich von Zeit zu Zeit.
- (14) a. Jetzt hat er den Nagel ausgezogen.
now has he the nail AFFIX+STEM
'Now he has pulled out the nail.'

- b. Mein Vater hat mich gestern Abend angerufen.
 my father has me yesterday evening AFFIX+STEM
 'My father called me on the phone yesterday evening.'
- (15) a. Jetzt kann sie den Nagel ausziehen.
 now can she the nail AFFIX+STEM
 'Now she can pull out the nail.'
- b. Am Abend kann er mich anrufen.
 in-the evening can he me AFFIX+STEM
 'He can call me in the evening.'
- (16) (Assume *weil* 'because' is a complementizer.)
- a. ...weil Marga Johann selten anruft.
 because Marga Johann seldom AFFIX+STEM
 '...because Marga seldom calls Johann on the phone.'
- b. Ich denke daß sie den Nagel auszieht.
 I think that she the nail AFFIX+STEM
 'I think that she is pulling out the nail.'

Does the framework you have developed provide a way to account for these observations?
 If so, say what it is; if not, revise your analysis so that it explains these facts.