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Andreas Kathol

Carnegie Mellon University/Universität Tübingen

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A Uniform Approach to V2 in German

Andreas Kathol

Carnegie Mellon University/Universität Tübingen

1. Approaches to V2

Within the current framework of transformational grammar there are basically two approaches to verb second sentence structure in German:

The first main line of research is based on the idea, originally due to den Besten that V2 is always a projection of COMP. It involves verb movement into the complementizer position and a concomitant movement of a phrasal constituent into the preverbal position which is nowadays generally taken to be the specifier of CP. There is no consent as for what the status of INFL should be. In some analyses, it does not figure as an independent syntactic category at all, but instead is assumed to be congruent with COMP. In others, it appears clause-finally where finite elements are found in subordinate clauses.

Among the conceptual problems for this approach is the undesirable claim that the categorial status of simple declarative sentences in German always has to be analyzed as different from their counterparts in English. Even more severe is the problem that the complementizer positions are used to hold elements that do not form a natural class. If we assume that SPEC(CP) and COMP are inherently positions for operators or operator-like elements such as wh-elements or lexical complementizers respectively we are forced to treat the verb and fronted constituents in V2 sentences as operators too. This would be warranted if fronting uniformly had a pragmatic function similar to topicalization in English, but it is clear that at least for subjects this is not the case.

Another line of research, pursued primarily by Travis assumes a dichotomy between the structure of V2 sentences which are subject-initial and those that have an initial non-subject. For the former, she proposes an analysis similar to the one given for the basic sentence structure of declaratives in English with verb movement into INFL. For fronted non-subjects, however, she assumes movement into COMP and specifier of CP respectively, that is an analysis identical to the approach discussed above.

In this paper, I want to argue that the empirical evidence is too weak to support this dichotomy and that all V2 sentences should be treated as categorially alike. However, contrary to the COMP approach to V2 I want to argue that the syntactic category is only a projection of INFL and in fact there no projection of COMP at all¹.

Travis' main argument for for the dichotomy is based on distributional differences of the neuter pronoun "es" which can occur sentence-initially when it is a subject, but not when it is a direct object, compare (1) to (2):

- (1) (... das Mädchen ...)
 the girl [neut]
 es_{sbj} kam zu spät zur Party
 PRON came too late to-the party
- (2) * es_{obj} haben viele Leute gesehen
 PRON have many people seen

If Travis is right and V2 sentences have to be analyzed as either IPs or CPs according to the kind of element that is taking the initial position, we would expect the latter to behave in the same way as subordinate clauses which are headed by a lexical complementizer.

This account, however, makes the wrong predictions for complementizer-less subordinate clauses which have V2 word order: whenever a verb selects a CP, non-subject initial V2 should be able to function as the verb's argument as well, but this is not case.

In German, verbs that take a sentential complement fall roughly into two classes:

1. Verbs that only take subordinate clauses with a lexical complementizer, such as "bezweifeln" (doubt) exemplified in (3). If there is no complementizer the sentence is ungrammatical as shown in (4):

- (3) Karl bezweifelt, daß er nicht kommen kann
 Karl doubts COMPL he not come can
- (4) * Karl bezweifelt, er könne nicht kommen
 Karl doubts he can_[subjunctive] not come

¹ See Schwartz and Vikner [1989] for a criticism of the dichotomy that instead argues for the traditional uniform COMP approach.

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2. So-called "bridge verbs" such as "glauben" (believe) that also permit a complementizerless subordinate clause ². Both (5) and (6) are grammatical:

- (5) Otto glaubt, daß er der Größte sei
 Otto believes COMP he the greatest is_[subj.]
- (6) Otto glaubt, er sei der Größte.
 Otto believes he is_[subj.] the greatest

Now, in the case in which complementizerless subordinate clauses contain an initial non-subject, they behave in exactly the same way as subject-initial ones. Only with bridge verbs as in (7) is the sentence grammatical, but (8) is out:

- (7) Otto glaubt, morgen werde er der Größte sein
 Otto believes tomorrow will_[subj.] he the greatest be
- (8) * Karl bedauert, morgen könne er nicht kommen
 Karl regrets tomorrow can_[subj.] he not come

Presumably the place where this difference is to be coded is the subcategorization information of the verb. Note, however, that even if it turns out that the possibility of taking a V2 sentential complement is entirely predictable from semantic or selectional properties of the verb, there remain certain constraints which seem to be exclusively sensitive to the syntactic structure of the sentential complement as noticed by Reis [1985]. It is always possible to extrapose a sentential complement outside to the right of the VP as shown in (9) and (10):

- (9) Meier hat gehofft, daß man ihn wählen werde
 Meier has hoped COMP one him elect will_[subj.]
- (10) Meier hat gehofft, man werde ihn wählen
 Meier has hoped one will_[subj.] him elect

For some verbs, there can be or has to be a d-pronoun within the VP as in (11) and (12):

- (11) Meier hat *darauf* gehofft, daß man ihn wählen werde
 Meier has D-PRON hoped COMP one him elect will_[subj.]
- (12) Meier hat *darauf* gehofft, man werde ihn wählen
 Meier has D-PRON hoped one will_[subj.] him elect

Whenever a d-pronoun is possible, the sentential complement has also the option of staying inside the VP, adjacent to the d-pronoun, but never in its complementizerless form, giving rise to a contrast between sentences (13) and (14):

- (13) Meier hat darauf, daß man ihn wählen werde, gehofft
 Meier has D-PRON COMP one him elect will_[subj.] hoped

² Some verbs require the mood of the complementizerless subordinate clause to be subjunctive, but this seems to be totally independent of the basic structure of V2 per se.

- (14) * Meier hat darauf, man werde ihn wählen, gehofft
 Meier has D-PRON one will_[subj.] him elect hoped

Another piece of evidence for a difference in syntactic category between V2 and other sentential complements comes from coordination. As examples (15) and (16) show, coordination is at best marginal if the two conjuncts differ with respect to their word order³:

- (15) * Otto glaubt, daß zwei mal zwei vier sei und
 Otto believes COMP two times two four is and
 alle übrige Mathematik sei Zeitverschwendung
 all remaining mathematics is waste-of-time

- (16) * Otto glaubt, zwei mal zwei sei vier und
 Otto believes two times two is four and
 daß alle übrige Mathematik Zeitverschwendung sei
 that all remaining mathematics waste-of-time is

Let us next consider the relation between matrix and embedded V2 sentences. As examples (17) and (18) show, the subject/object asymmetry of the pronoun "es" carries over in exactly the same way as seen in matrix clauses:

- (17) ...das Mädchen ...
 Karl glaubt, es_{sbj} komme zu spät zur Party
 Karl believes PRON come_[subj.] too late to-the party
- (18) * Karl glaubt, es_{obj} haben viele Leute gesehen
 Karl believes PRON have many people seen

Whatever the reason for the difference in behavior of the forms of "es" is, in the case of embedded clauses the evidence is clearly against an analysis that relates it to two distinct positions reflecting a difference in syntactic category among V2 complements.

In the case of subordinate clauses, the two types of V2 sentences that Travis distinguishes behave in a similar way with respect to their occurrence with verbs that take sentential complements. Moreover, I take the evidence from the cooccurrence with d-pronouns and from coordination to support the claim that the syntactic structure of V2 clauses is different from CP. If we assume that the minimal syntactic category of a tensed sentence which is not CP is IP, we are led to the conclusion that not only both matrix and embedded V2 sentences have the same syntactic structure but also that the structure in either case is IP independent of the grammatical function of the initial element.

From this it also follows as a corollary that the subject in German has to be analyzed as originating within the VP: Sentences (19) and (20) are instances of V2 word order and, given the evidence collected so far, have to be analyzed as IPs:

³ For some speakers there seems to be a difference between (15) and (16), the latter being worse than the first. This seems to conform with the analysis of "asymmetric coordination" given below. (Thanks to T. Höhle for pointing this out to me.)

- (19) drei Räuber_{sbj} haben die Bank_{obj} ausgeräumt
 three robbers have the bank robbed
- (20) *es* haben drei Räuber_{sbj} die Bank_{obj} ausgeräumt
 EXPL have three robbers the bank robbed

In (20), however, the SPEC of IP position is occupied by a semantically empty expletive element that can only occur in this position⁴. Unless we want to allow additional argument positions outside of the VP or subject movement back into the VP, it follows that in this case the subject surfaces in its original position, to the right of INFL and therefore within the VP.

2. A uniform treatment of V2 as IP

Recently, an analysis of V2 in Yiddish has been worked out by M. Diesing (Diesing [1989]) which incorporates a similar idea. In her analysis, the SPEC of IP is no longer an inherent argument position and it is only by virtue of the nature of the moved element that the position has to be analyzed as an A or A-bar position.

If we adopt this analysis, though, we are faced with the problem of determining what the relationship between the head and specifier position is in the case of German. In work by Fukui (Fukui [1988]), drawing on previous joint work with M. Speas (Fukui and Speas [1986]), it is assumed that generally, in order for the specifier position to be licensed, there has to be an agreement relation between the specifier and the head. The typical instance of such an agreement relation is subject-verb agreement. If no such relation can be established or if it is explicitly blocked, the specifier position is not licensed and there is no phrasal projection of the functional category.

This raises the question what the head-specifier relation is if non-subjects fill the specifier position. It cannot be the same kind of agreement as in the English case. As (21) shows, also adjuncts can be fronted and there is no obvious agreement relation holding between the adjunct and the verb.

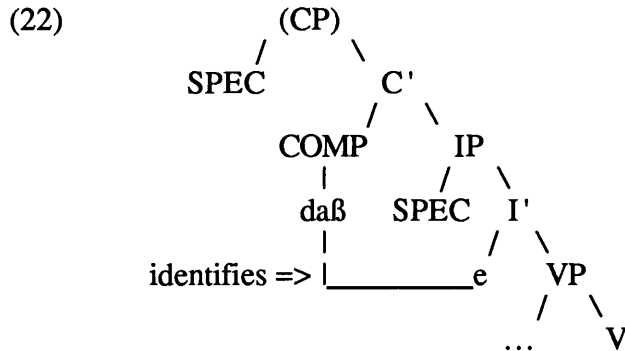
- (21) Morgen kommt Karl nach Hause
 tomorrow comes Karl home

If we want to keep the basic idea that, as a case of the full interpretation principle, specifier positions of functional categories have to be licensed, we are forced to revise the licensing conditions for specifier of IP in the case of German and Yiddish.

⁴ By "expletive", I mean what in Travis [1984] is referred to as "ES/0 pleonastic". This kind has to be kept distinct from those pleonastics that, for example occur with weather verbs as in (1) and which are present in every syntactic environment - and therefore have to be treated as a (semantically empty) argument of the verb.

- (1) *es* regnet
 (2) morgen regnet *es*
 (3) ... daß *es* morgen regnet

Let us take a look at complementizer-initial subordinate clauses. With Travis I assume that the structure of such sentences given in (20) is basically the same as the one for matrix sentences, however with the crucial difference that no instance of matrix or embedded V2 sentences seems to involve a projection of the complementizer.



I adopt her analysis that the empty INFL node need not and, in fact, must not be filled by the verb since this position has been identified by the complementizer. This analysis rests upon the assumption that the features of empty INFL are not recovered through chains, but instead through head feature transmission. By this mechanism a head can identify the features of the head of a sister.

One question that arises is what the status of the specifier of IP is in subordinate clauses. For this, let us again take a look at the distribution of expletive "es" in German. Whenever the conditions are met which allow for such an expletive, it can only occur in a V2 sentence like (23), not, however, in its complementizer-initial counterpart (25):

- (23) drei Reiter kommen
three riders come
- (24) es kommen drei Reiter
EXPL come three riders
- (25) daß drei Reiter kommen
COMPL three riders come
- (26) * daß es drei Reiter kommen
COMP EXPL three riders come

Under the assumption that the structure of V2 sentences is uniformly IP, the expletive is in the specifier position of IP in (24). I want to argue that in this case, the expletive is just a phonological manifestation of this position which is licensed by the verb in INFL, independent of any agreement relation. The fact that we don't find expletives in the presence of a complementizer as in (26) then indicates that the crucial position is not explicitly expressed because it is not there at all.

It could also be the case that this position is there but its overt phonological expression has been blocked by an empty category. However, there is further

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evidence for my assumption coming from facts about a certain kind of left-dislocation in German which has been referred to in the literature as "contrastive left dislocation" (v. Haaften et al. [1983]). The main characteristic of this construction is a connectedness requirement between the initial constituent and the anaphoric element right-adjacent to it. Part of the connectedness requirement involves case agreement. As v. Haaften et al. show, the initial position is not base-generated and in particular, I assume here that it is created by an adjunction process at the left periphery of IP. Thus, we get structures like (27):

- (27) [IP Karl [IP den_i [_{I'} kriegen [_{VP} wir t_i bald v]]]]
 Karl D-ELEM. get we soon
Karl we will get him soon

The crucial observation now is that left-dislocation is impossible in subordinate clauses in the presence of a lexical complementizer as in (28):

- (28) * daß Karl, den wir bald kriegen
 COMP Karl D-ELEM. we soon get

Following Chomsky [1986], I assume that adjunction can only take place at phrasal categories. We then have a natural account why left-dislocation cannot take place in subordinate clauses:

If empty INFL cannot license the SPEC of IP position, there is no phrasal projection of INFL and hence no adjunction can happen to create the position for the dislocated element.⁵

Finally, the absence of the SPEC of IP position in embedded clauses headed by a complementizer is in accordance with our earlier assumptions about the position of subject and object "es". If the preverbal position in V2 sentences is uniformly SPEC of IP, it is this position alone which must be responsible for the asymmetry between the distribution of the different forms of this pronoun. Hence, we would expect this asymmetry to be there also in verb-final clauses if indeed the specifier position were present. As examples (29) and (30) show, however, we do not find any such asymmetry in these cases:

- (29) Karl weiß, daß es_{subj} kommen wird
 Karl knows COMP PRON come will
- (30) Karl weiß, daß es_{obj} viele Leute gesehen haben
 Karl knows COMP PRON many people seen have

This I take to be further evidence for the fact that there is no phrasal INFL projection in complementizer-initial subordinate clauses.

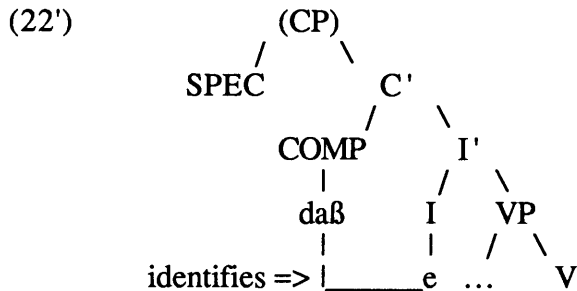
⁵ If the existence of an IP is the main precondition for left-dislocation, one would expect it to be grammatical in the case of complementizerless subordinate clauses. This expectation is in fact borne out, and again, the nature of the element in SPEC(IP) has no bearing at all:

- (4) Otto glaubt, seine Schweser, die habe alle Äpfel geklaut
 Otto believes his sister D-PRON has all apples stolen
- (5) Otto glaubt, seinen Freund Karl, den habe man gestern verhauen.
 Otto believes his friend Karl D-PRON has one yesterday beaten

We are then led to the following conclusion concerning the licensing conditions of Spec(IP) in German:

A necessary requirement for the licensing of the specifier of IP is that INFL be lexically filled by the verb.

Hence, we have to modify the basic structure of subordinate clauses which is given in (22'):



3. Consequences for the analysis of coordination

The analysis we have developed so far is capable of shedding some light on some phenomena occurring with coordination in German. Conditional sentences are either headed by the complementizer “wenn” (as in (31)) or they come complementizerless, in which case the sentence is verb initial (as in (32) from Reis [1985]):

(31) wenn ich ein Vogel wäre, flög ich zu Dir.
 if I a bird was_[subj.] flew_[subj.] I to you

(32) wäre ich ein Vogel, flög ich zu Dir.
 was_[subj.] I a bird flew_[subj.] I to you

However, if two conditional sentences are coordinated, both conjuncts have to be of the same sentence structure, in particular, we get the grammaticality pattern of (33) to (36):

(33) [[wenn ich ein Vogel wäre] und
 [wenn ich Flügel hätte]], flög ich zu Dir.
 ... if I wings had_[subj.]...

(34) [[wäre ich ein Vogel] und
 [hätte ich Flügel]], flög ich zu Dir.
 ...had_[subj.] I wings ...

(35) * [[wenn ich ein Vogel wäre] und
 [hätte ich Flügel]], flög ich zu Dir.

(36) * [[wäre ich ein Vogel] und
 [wenn ich Flügel hätte]], flög ich zu Dir.

Under the assumption that coordination is only grammatical if the two conjuncts are of the same syntactic category we have to analyze the two conjuncts in (35) and (36) as differing with respect to their syntactic status: in the presence of a lexical complementizer, a conditional clause is a projection of COMP whereas if it is complementizerless, it is only a projection of INFL. In particular, I want to suggest that in the presence of certain features in INFL such as [+conditional], licensing of the specifier position is explicitly blocked so that INFL does not project to phrasal bar-level.

Now let us look at instances of so called “mixed coordination” which at first sight appear to challenge the claim that both conjuncts have to be of the same syntactic category. Sentence (37) exemplifies the case in which the complementizer has syntactic scope over both conjuncts identifying INFL in both cases:

- (37) Wenn [[r e du nach Hause kommst] und
 [r e der Gerichtsvollzieher an der Tür steht]]...
 if you home come and the bailiff at the door stands

However under certain ill-understood circumstances⁶ the second conjunct can have V2 word order as in (38):

- (38) Wenn [[r e du nach Hause kommst] und
 [IP der Gerichtsvollzieher steht vor der Tür e]]...

The puzzling fact about (38) is that the second conjunct which undoubtedly is part of the whole conditional has V2 structure, although single conditionals can never appear in that form. However, we have an explanation for the structure in (38) if we assume that the complementizer only identifies the first INFL. This means that the domain in which an identification relation between COMP and INFL holds can be smaller than the scope of the complementizer. In particular the identification domain can be more local, since the first INFL cannot be “skipped”, hence the ungrammaticality of (39):

- (39) * Wenn [[IP du kommst nach Hause] und
 [r e der Gerichtsvollzieher vor der Tür
 steht]], ...

The structure of (38) then follows straightforwardly from our earlier assumptions: since INFL in the second conjunct is not identified by COMP, the verb has to move into this position so that the licensing conditions for the specifier are met⁷.

⁶ Also with “als”, “wie”: (as)

(6) Als wir so dastanden und niemand wußte, was wir als nächstes tun sollten, ...
 as we so stood and nobody knew what we as next do should

(7) Wie wir so dastanden und niemand wußte, was wir als nächstes tun sollten, ...

⁷There remains a problem however. Earlier, we said that in the presence of [+cond] licensing of the specifier is blocked, but then there is no reason to believe that in cases of mixed coordination of conditionals this feature would not be present in both conjuncts. Hence one would expect that this feature should block the phrasal projection in the second conjunct. This problem disappears when one adopts the distinction between “inherited” and “instantiated” features as for instance worked out

Finally note that mixed coordination phenomena contribute yet another piece of evidence against Travis' dichotomy among V2 sentences. Sentence (40) shows that the nature of the initial constituent within the second conjunct does not have any bearing on the possibility of mixed coordination:

- (40) Wenn [[I' e du nach Hause kommst] und
 [IP dir hat der Gerichtsvollzieher alles
 weggenommen v]]...
 ... from-you has the bailiff all away-taken ...

4. Conclusion

The main purpose of this paper is to show that a uniform analysis of V2 sentence structure in German is both conceptually desirable and empirically adequate. I argue for analyzing V2 as IP.

From that it follows that the licensing conditions for spec of IP have to be revised. As a consequence, we get an elegant account for the structure of subordinate clauses and mixed coordination phenomena.

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in GPSG. Then phrasal projection is only blocked by instantiated features whereas in the case of mixed coordination, the relevant feature is inherited from the complementizer.

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