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Word order in the middle field of the German sentence

0. The problem and its scope

Although there is a good deal work on word order in German both
in the traditional literature of German grammar and in generative
studies, in no way, one can safely say, is the question solved
whether German shares one of the most crucial characteristics
of a configurational language, namely properties of word order
in functional dependence, or whether there are no such traces
whatsoever including most essentially also word order character-
istics within NP-structure and PP-structure. It is perhaps
interesting to note at this point that studies undertaken by
traditional German grammarians without exception betray complete
abstraction from grammatical functions in this question. Rather,
as they claim, German seems to give prominence to word order
criteria such as topic (*Thema*) and focus (*Rhema*) (Drach, Boost,
Engel, Kirkwood). Not one of the above mentioned authors, how-
ever, has clarified the question whether topic and focus have
the status of a word order parameter in strictly *grammatical*
terms or in terms of *text organisation*. The explicit appeal in
all of these works to parameters of markedness and unmarkedness,
i.e. whether a sentence is to be taken as "neutral" or not, or
whether it has a particular word order in dependence from certain
prior contexts, indicates that topic and focus do n o t play
a grammatical role.

I take it to be evident that the solution to the question
whether or not German, aside from considerations about strict
word order within the structures of NP and PP, does in fact at-
tribute restrictions of serialization to grammatical functions
such as subject, direct object and indirect object, is of far-
reaching consequences within the model of Government and Binding.
If, in contrast to English, passivation, for example, is not
restricted to the existence of an object right-adjacent to the
verb, then positional adjacency will not play a trigger role in
this grammatical process. Similar considerations hold for the
subject and its demotion in passivation. In such a case we
might say that the whole theory of trace should be abandoned

for German. But it is easy to see that one cannot stop at this
point, since trace theory is closely connected with case- and
theta-role-theory within the framework of Government and
Binding. It is under these premisses that Haider (1983) has
come to the conclusion that the subject in German is case- and
theta-role-governed by the verb. This is in total contrast to
Chomsky's assumption in the government and binding framework:
if the infinitival PRO-subject were to be taken as case- and
theta-governed by the verb one would have to abandon the c-
command relation as the main government criterion in the strict-
ly hierarchical structure of the sentence and, primarily, the
English VP. If, however, no such hierarchy were to be maintained
for the German verbal complex on account of word order restric-
tions the subject would be c-commanded as well by the verb. And
this, consequently, would affect the binding principles for
anaphora and PRO. This, in turn, would have consequences on as-
sumptions obtaining to exceptional case assignment. In short,
if it could be shown that within a language like German, devoid
in fundamental ways of positional criteria for grammatical
processes, other principles from the theory of case and theta-
role would have to be sought to regulate theoretical processes,
government and binding and its modular organisation would re-
ceive a much richer facet than had been thought up to these
days. Arguments to the effect that subject and object in German
are to be taken as symmetrical in their grammatical, structural,
properties have been forwarded by Haider (1984), notably by
pointing to extraction phenomena.

If, for the moment, we leave aside NP- and PP-structure, would
it then be correct to assume that German is one of the word
order-free languages? Lötscher (1981) seems to take this posi-
tion in that among his word-order organising parameters he
lists only parameters such as text saliency, speaker saliency
and text-topic and text-focus. It is obvious, however, that
functional considerations do play a role in the question of
word order in German too, as Lenerz (1977) has shown convin-
cingly. The present article is meant to extend and evaluate the
arguments forwarded by representatives of these two positions.
Moreover, the discussion centers on the question whether word

order problems are also to be solved in German in the context of
semantic types of verbs such as the ergative verbs. Finally, the
question is touched whether the category of *closest argument* to
a verb (CA) as used in the case theories developed for German
by Den Besten (1981) and Van Riemsdijk (1982) do in fact pro-
vide a non-circular explanation of word order phenomena.

1. Restrictions of VP-internal topic-focus distribution

As Lenerz (1977: 44f.) and earlier authors (such as Behaghel)
have noticed the following restrictions hold for indirect objects
(IO) and direct objects (DO) with respect to their status as
topic(-RH) and focus(+RH). [RH = *rheme*, + = direct linear se-
quence].

(1) If DO = focus, then DO + IO is not possible

(2) If IO ≠ focus, then DO + IO is not possible

(3) If DO = focus and if IO ≠ focus, then DO + IO is not
    possible

(1) to (3) boil down to the general conclusion that IO + DO in
German is the unmarked word order (WO), while DO + IO is a
marked one. This is what (4) generalises:

(4) If DO has more focus status than IO, then DO + IO is not
    possible

The following restrictions are connected to the previous one:

(5) Definiteness restriction:
    If DO is [-def] then the order DO + IO is not possible
    (Lenerz 1977: 54)

(6) If PIO = [+RH], then PIO + DO is not possible

Take the following distributions:

(7) *Ich habe an meinen Bruder[+RH] das Paket geschickt

(8) Ich habe meinem Bruder(IO = [+RH]) das Paket geschickt

(9) If PO is [+RH], then PO + DO is not possiblr

(10) *Ich habe an den Nagel[+RH] die Jacke gehängt

(11) Ich habe das Bild an den Nagel[+RH] gehängt

Pronominal constituents render a slightly different picture
(Abraham 1981).

(12) *io + do, whereas   do + io
(13) *IO + do, whereas   do + IO
(14) *DO + io, whereas   io + DO
(15) ^{m}p(i)o + DO, whereas DO + p(i)o
(16) *p(i)o + do, whereas do + p(i)o

The following sentences illustrate the rules given in (12)-(16)

(17) *Ich habe ihm(io) ihn(do) geschickt
(18) *Ich habe dem Vater(IO) ihn(do) geschickt
(19) *Ich habe den Brief(DO) ihm(io) geschickt
(20) ^{m}Ich habe an ihn(p(i)o)) den Brief(DO) geschickt
(21) *Ich habe an ihn(p(i)o)) ihn(do) geschickt

2. The place of the subject: S-internal topicalisation

The following cases are restricted to phenomena where the subject occurs in what is called the middle field in German: that is collocation of subject and another grammatical function between COMP and the sentence-finite verb, in interrogative sentences and in sentences with impersonal *es* (Lenerz 1977: 97 based on fundamental insights previously made by Behaghel 1930).

(22) *COMP+LOC/TEMP[+RH] + SUBJ, whereas ^{OK}COMP + SUBJ + LOC/TEMP[+RH]

Note that no such restriction exists in case the subject carries the status of focus:

(23) COMP + SUBJ[+RH] +LOC/TEMP as well as COMP + LOC/TEMP + SUBJ[+RH]

This is illustrated by (24)-(26).

(24) *Wo/wann, meinst Du, ist der Chauffeur eingeschlafen?*
(25) *Ich meine, daß bei Zwolle/um Mitternacht[+RH] der Chauffeur eingeschlafen ist*
(26) *Ich meine, daß der Chauffeur bei Zwolle/um Mitternacht[+RH] eingeschlafen ist.*

LOC and TEMP fall under this distribution irrespective of their obligatory or non-obligatory status with respect to the verb; see (27)-(29).

(27) *Was glaubst Du, hat Robert Koch 1876 entdeckt?*

(28) *Wann, glaubst Du, hat Robert Koch den Tuberkulose-erreger entdeckt?*

(29) **Ich glaube, daß Robert Koch 1876[+RH] den Tuberkulose-erreger[-RH] entdeckt hat.*
Ich glaube, daß Robert Koch den Tuberkuloseerreger[-RH] 1876[+RH] entdeckt hat.

(30) *COMP + SUBJ + LOC/TEMP[+RH] + PO, whereas ^{m}COMP + SUBJ + LOC/TEMP + PO[+RH]

Note that (30) depicts a distribution identical to (22) in that the PO takes the position of SUBJ in (22). The same relation holds if we replace PO by free datives. See (31ff.)

(31) *COMP + dat[+RH] + SUBJ + DO, whereas^{ok}COMP + SUBJ[+RH] + dat + DO

(32) *Wer, glaubst Du, hat dem Gärtner die Blumen gegossen?*
Wem, glaubst Du, hat Mutter die Blumen gegossen?

(33) **Ich glaube, daß dem Gärtner[+RH] Mutter die Blumen gegossen hat.*

(34) *Ich glaube, daß Mutter[+RH] dem Gärtner die Blumen gegossen hat.*

(22)-(33) make obvious that the subject in focus position is freer with respect to word order than LOC, TEMP or the free dative ceteris paribus.

The subject and a variable number of real objects have the following distributional characteristic:

(35) COMP + SUBJ + IO is the unmarked word order: cf.
*COMP + IO[+RH] + SUBJ and *COMP + IO + SUBJ[-RH], whereas^{ok}COMP + IO + S[+RH]

The restrictional pattern is again that of "focus last", a pattern that we have been able to observe also for the colloca-tions of subject and IO and subject and PO, respectively. See (22), (23), (30) and (31). The only exception that "focus last" permits holds for the function of subject (see (31)). See again (36) and (37) which illustrate (35).

(36) **Ich vermute, daß dem Besucher[+RH] Mutter[-RH] ein-geschenkt hat.*

(37) *Ich vermute, daß dem Besucher[-RH] Mutter[+RH] einge-schenkt hat.*

These are correlations between focus and grammatical func-
tions. The following further refinement in the complex of word
order restrictions is due to Lenerz (1977: 100ff.; Abraham
1981: 105ff.). See the following examples:

(38) *Ich schätze, daß dem Mann[+RH] der Polizist[-RH]
     hilft.

(39) Ich schätze, daß dem Mann[+RH] die Kur[-RH] hilft.

Note that (38) is ruled out by the "focus last"-principle, as
in (35). But why is it that this principle does not rule out
(39) too? (Lenerz' sentence, 1977: 105). The only distinction
in this distribution of acceptabilities rests in the semantic
characteristic of the subject: der Polizist in (38) is
[+agentive], die Kur in (39) is [-agentive]. See also (40)
and (41) which make clear that the distribution is not dependent
on definiteness effects.

(40) Ich schätze, daß dem Mann[-RH] ein Chirurg[+RH] hilft.

(41) Ich schätze, daß ein Chirurg[+RH] dem Mann[-RH] hilft.

(42) and (43) exemplify the same semantic distribution.

(42) Ich glaube aber auch nicht, daß jemanden außer wirk-
     liche Fans diese Übertragung[-agentive] interessiert.

(43) *Ich glaube aber auch nicht, daß jemanden außer wirk-
     liche Fans die Polizei[+agentive] perlustrieren wird.

Clearly, the fact that a subject has the semantic character-
istic of an agentive is, in the majority of cases, a matter of
the semantic type of verb. If we take (44) and (45) to be
generalisations about such verbal classes such generalisations
allow us to formulate connections between these semantic verbal
classes and word order restrictions such as in (46) and (47).

(44) (SUBJ → [+AG]) → (SUBJ → [+Theme])
(45) (SUBJ → [-AG]) → (OBJ → [+Theme])[1]

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[1] Lenerz used the term Mitteilungswert for what has been termed
Theme here. His assumption was that the restrictions of word
order should be formulated in terms of the Praguian FSP (Func-
tional Sentence Perspective). There is no doubt that, for the
purpose here, it is more useful to handle Gruber's and Jacken-
doff's semantic concept which can be identified, in this nar-
row context, to Lenerz' concept of the Mitteilungswert. For a
discussion of the differences between the terminology of FSP
and Lenerz on the one hand, and the one used here see Abraham
1984.

(44) holds for the verbal class with the characteristic [+active] (as well as for predicates which can receive such interpretations by different contextual collocations) and specifically verbs which in the grammar of German as called "Vorgangsverben". (45) holds for verbs of experience, "psychological" verbs, as well as for a number of symmetrical verbs such as *ähneln, begegnen, treffen, gegenüberstehen.*

These are then the relations between the distributions of theme and word order:

(46) (OBJ → [+Theme]) → (OBJ + SUBJ)

(47) (OBJ → [-Theme]) → *(OBJ + SUBJ)

(46) holds for psychological verbs, (47) for active verbs. This distinction yields the following assymmetrical distributional pattern:

(48) active verbs: psychological verbs:

    SUBJ[+AG] + OBJ[-Theme]   SUBJ[-AG] + OBJ[+Theme]

    *OBJ[-Theme] + SUBJ[+AG] OBJ[+Theme] + SUBJ[-AG]

What this amounts to is the general principle that a grammatical function with the characteristic of agentive must not receive the position of sentence-last in the German middle field. According to (44) and (45), this boils down to the principle that the collocation of subjectivity and thematicity in sentence-last is not permitted.

Note that in German, and possibly universally, the following relation holds between an agent of a verb and subjecthood of a sentence.

(49) It is necessary that AG(x) → SUBJ(x), for x = any NP or Pron in a sentence to which AG and SUBJ can be assigned.

From (49) follows that it is not possible that ~SUBJ(x) → AG(x), although it is not necessary that SUBJ(x) → AG(x). Now, the agent plays an important role in the process of passivation in German. (50) below sketches, fully identical to what happens in English, this process of passivation in German:

(50) ACTIVE: Subj^1 + IO + DO

       PASSIVE: Subj^2 (←DO) + IO + (P-AG (←Subj^1))

Let us assume now that the passivised verb loses one of its participants under conditions of semantic valency, namely the agent. Quite obviously, there is only one theme over, for instance, for the IO. The question then arises whether a passive form with blut one theme has the same word order characteristics as the equivalent active sentence with the additional Agent. Let us check this out with respect to the position of focus (Lenerz 1977: 116f.).

(51) *Was* $(1^2 \leftarrow 4^1)$, *glaubst du, ist dem Albrecht* $(3^1 \leftarrow 3^2)$
     vom Vater (P-AG $\leftarrow 1^1$) geschickt worden?

(52) *Ich glaube, daß dem Albrecht[-RH] eine Torte[+RH,-TH]*
     geschickt worden ist.

(53) **[?]Ich glaube, daß eine Torte[+RH,-TH] dem Albrecht[-RH]*
     geschickt worden ist.

(54) *Wem, glaubst du, ist (vom Vater) eine Torte geschickt*
     worden?

(55) *Ich glaube, daß dem Albrecht[+RH] eine Torte[-RH,-TH]*
     geschickt worden ist.

(56) *Ich glaube, daß eine Torte[-RH,-TH] dem Albrecht[+RH]*
     geschickt worden ist.

(57) surveys the distributional characteristics schematically. Note that (57) holds for active verbs, i.e. for verbs whose subject is an [+AG], only.

(57) ACTIVE: PASSIVE:

$^{m}\text{Subj}^1$ + DO[-RH] + IO[+RH] $^{m}\text{Subj}^2$ + IO[+RH] ... see (56)

$^{m}\text{Subj}^1$ + DO[+RH] + IO[-RH]   *Subj^2[+RH] + IO ... see (53)

Subj^1 + IO[+RH] + DO[-RH]   IO[+RH] + Subj^2 ... see (55)

Subj^1 + IO[-RH] + DO[+RH]   IO + Subj^2[+RH] ... see (52)

Note, however, that our observations and schematic conclusions overlap with the principle of definiteness laid down in (5). The non-acceptance marking for (53), for example, is a statistical one and by no means a categorial one. It is easy to shown that another wording of this example with a definite NP as subject of the passive sentence renders the structure less unacceptable. This, then raises the question whether our observations as to the serialisation in the de-agentivised passive sentences without considering definiteness restrictions is of

any value at all. Note also that our restrictions in (48) turn
out the characteristic of agentivity to be the only one that the
restrictional pattern is based on. It is easy to fall victim to
wrong conclusions if the restrictions on definiteness and, by
the same token, on the clitic status of personal pronouns are
disregarded. Note the following examples in this context. Com-
pare, above all, (59) and (60).

(58) *Wer glaubt, daß mir(io) das Mädchen(Subj[+RH]) gefolgt
ist?*

(59) *Wer glaubt, daß das Mädchen[+RH] mir gefolgt ist?*

(60) *Wer glaubt daß mir(io) ein Thaler(Subj[+RH]) geborgt
wurde?*

(61) **Wer glaubt, daß ein Thaler[+RH] mir geborgt wurde?*

Lenerz (1977: 117) has pointed out that the different ac-
ceptabilities of (59) and (61) warrant the conclusion that the
collocation of markedness in the active form and unacceptability
in the passive form is in fact controlled by the process of
passivation and cannot be accounted for only by the word order
patterns of the grammatical functions alone. However, I put
strong doubts on Lenerz observation and, consequently, his
theoretical conclusion. Note first that (61) contains a clitic
personal pronoun which, in any case, is very hard to get in a
sentence-final position next to any number of other NP's in the
sentence. Note further that, once we have replaced the clitic
personal pronoun by a full NP, what seems to count is the in-
definiteness of the preposed *ein Thaler*. (61a) seems to be
fully acceptable.

(61a) *Wer glaubt denn, daß dieses kostbare Fahrrad[+RH]
dem Landstreicher geborgt wurde?*

The unacceptability of (61) then, receives a different explana-
tion than the structural one proposed by Lenerz.

If our doubts as to the structural restrictions of word
order is correct it would seem to be a promising chapter in
our investigation to cast a look at ergative structures. Erga-
tive verbs, as we know from Burzio (1981), behave like transi-
tive verbs in many respects. If we were correct in disarding
with functional word order restrictions of transitive verbs, the
same phenomenon should be observable with regative verbs also.

This line of investigation will be followed in the next chapter.

3. The 'ergative' basis of word order restrictions in German

It has to be borne in mind that the main principle, as observed by Behaghel and Lenerz, restricts the word order of NP's within a sentence independent from context parameters. Specifically, that an NP of lesser focus status (more topic status) is placed before an NP with more focus (lesser topic) status, has nothing to do with the phrase structure grammar of the language as such. Its serialisation is not determined by any sentential, grammatical parameter. Two things follow from this. In the first place, it will be the specific task of investigation in the grammar of German to make out exactly where the demarcation line between rules of a contextual nature and rules of a strictly grammatical nature lies. Lenerz' restriction of "agent never last" will have to be seen as a rule that belongs strictly to the grammar of German. Behaghel's rules, on the other hand, will not fall under a sentential parametrisation since topic and focus are presummably text determinants. One is reminded of the current definitions of "giveness" versus "newness" and "thema" versus "rhema", respectively. Consequently, also, the concepts of markedness and unmarkedness seem to be relevant within a dimension the defining properties of which lie outside of sentence grammar. Strictly speaking the property of markedness assigned to a particular serialisation of NP's within a sentence is nonsensical with respect to the sentence grammar (see Höhle 198).

Naturally, there are border line cases. For example, the question arises whether the principle of "definiteness before undefiniteness" (see principle 5 above for its proper and more specific formation) seems to be a principle of grammatical status, although it is derived within a textual perspective, in that it holds without exception.

This brings us to the second point. As long as we are not able to determine the categories of topic and focus in terms of structural units we will not be able to let them play the part of constituents in the grammar devised in the sense of modern

syntactic theory. This, quite obviously, has nothing to do with
question whether or not we can also fill in the semantic units
for such global categories as topic and focus. But note that it
will have to be seen as a very decisive factor for the question
as to what exactly we are doing with linguistic phenomena:
whether we set out to group languages in accordance with certain
statistical properties, much in the sense of the typologies set
up in discourse grammar, or whether we aim at describing how a
specific language can be generated on the basis of a lexicon
and a set of abstract rules. The latter is an approach radically
different from the first one. And it still remains to be seen as
what exactly the so called "topic-focus-prominent languages"
as postulated by Hopper and Thompson, Schachter, Vennemann and
many others, will have to figure if reflected upon against this
dichotymy. In other words, unless we are able to clarify the
syntactic, constituent status of topic and focus, we do not
deal with a sentential grammar in the more specific sense at
all. And, consequently, it does not make sense to characterise
a language as a more topic-prominent or more focus-prominent
one unless we specify by which syntactic or semantic categories
or else by which modules of the theory of grammar in the sense
of universal grammar (Chomsky 1981) such categories have to be
accounted for. As far I can see, only two publications so far
have given full credit to this line of argument: Kiss (1981)
for Hungarian, and Scherpenisse (1984; in this volume). Note,
however, that the issue is far from being settled for Hungarian
(Kenesei 1984).

Whether German is a configurational or a non-configurational
language, and, possibly, to what degree it is configurational
or non-configurational, will have to be made out in accordance
with structural properties of a sentence grammar. Semantic
properties grouping verb classes together are certainly among
such sentential parameters. Den Besten (1982   ) has made an
attempt to account for word order phenomena in German on the
basis of properties that resemble the characteristics of the
class of "ergative" verbs. His conclusion to the effect that the
German middle field can be characterised configurationally rests
on the following assumptions and observations:

(62) He assumes that there are two sorts of movement pro-
cesses: sentence internal ones (between Subj and Obj)
as opposed to VP-internal ones (between, among others,
IO and DO). It is to be noted that this point of depart-
ure rests crucially on the assumption that marked vs.
unmarked serialisations allow conclusions as to the
phrase structure grammar of German.

(63) Based on empirical observations, Den Besten claims syn-
tactic differences between the class of transitive verbs
and two-place intransitive ones (such as most of the
psychological verbs and the so-called ergative verbs).
For the latter class, the only theme (in Gruber's and
Jackendoff's sense; see above (44) and (45) is generated
within $\bar{V}$, i.e. in the structural place of the DO of the
other, active class of verbs.

Note that this again assumes that the issue whether
German has a flat VP or a hierarchically structured VP
is by no means settled in favour of the structural solu-
tion (for arguments to the contrary see Haider 1983,
1984b). We will see which empirical evidence Den Besten
uses to approach the issue. One more phenomenon is to
be noted in this context: verbs belonging to the psycho-
logical class, such as *gefallen, behagen, stören, scha-
den,* have both a passive intransitive, and an active in-
transitive variant. It is only in their status as in-
active variant that they depict the desired "ergative"
properties.

(64) Nominative is assigned in terms of government or else in
terms of "chain" government, namely when [NP,S] is not
occupied in the structural tree or in case there is just
one theme to take the place of [NP,$\bar{V}$]. Note that this
covers the subject of the passive, which is the reflex
of the original DO and its place in the tree ([NP,$\bar{V}$]),
as well as verbs which are "ergative" in nature, that is
verbs with only one thematic NP, which, consequently is
to be generated as [NP,$\bar{V}$].

This again rests on the assumption that there is a

clear preference of serialisation between the two NP's
in (65) and (66) below (Den Besten 1983:   ).

(65) ... *daß meinem Onkel eine Urne geschenkt wird*
  *... *daß eine Urne meinem Onkel geschenkt wird*
(66) ... *daß meinem Onkel Musik gefallen wird*
  *... *daß Musik meinem Onkel gefallen wird.*

It should be clear from the examples above that the "un-
accepted" versions have nothing to do with the fact that
(65) has been passivised and (66) has ergative-like
predicates, but that much rather it falls under the
restriction valid for indefinite NP's. If both NP's are
either definite or indefinite, i.e. indistinct with
respect to the definiteness characterization, then, at
most, there is a difference of markedness. Markedness,
however, is not a parameter of sentential grammar, but
of its text organisation. It thus seems doubtful that
Den Besten's conclusion to a partial configurational
systematization of the German middle field is based on
correct empirical evidence.

(67) Den Besten further assumes that for word order varia-
tions and/or the assignment of nominative for the
necessary subject function, the empty category in the
structural tree below is to be filled either by the
thematic NP or the structural object.

(68)
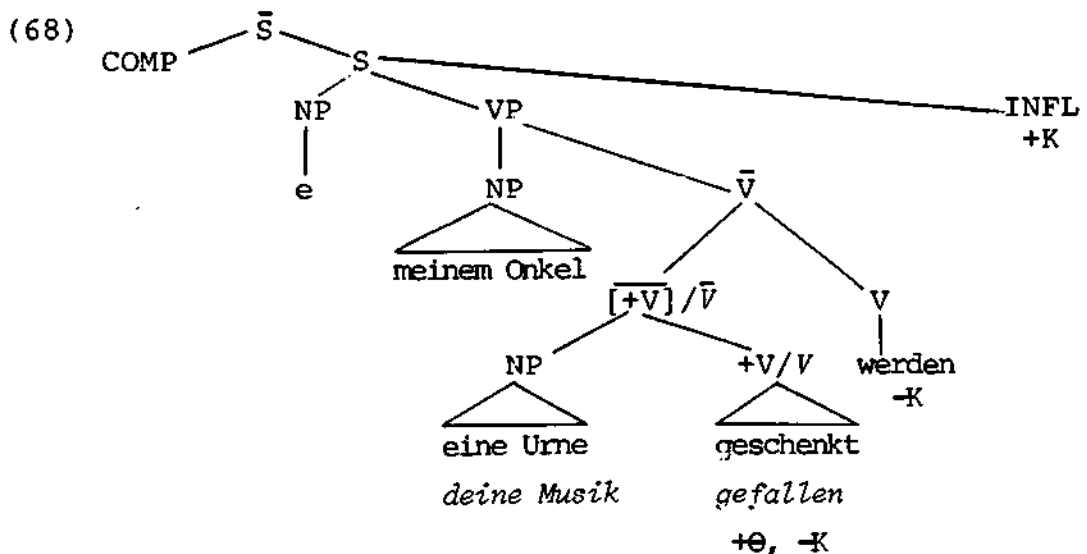
(69) Given (68), the movement·operation of [NP,$\bar{V}$] or [NP,(+$\bar{V}$)]
is obligatory in the case that the main verb has an active
meaning. This accounts for the excluded serialisation
*Obj + Subj[+agentive]. See (48). A similar mechanic
determines the word order restrictions valid for prono-
minals. For the filtering mechanics see Den Besten 1983.

Note again that both (68) and (69) depart from the
assumption that German in fact has to be accounted for
in terms of a hierarchical structuring in general and
specifically a hierarchical, non-flat VP.

The following examples illustrates that verbs often
classified as ergative-like one do not really contribute
to the desired evidence.

(70) *Wer sagt, daß das Rad(Subj) meinem Bruder(IO[+RH]) ge-
hört?*

(71) *Wer sagt, daß meinem Bruder(IO[+RH]) das Rad gehört?*

(72) **Wer sagt, daß das Rad[+RH] meinem Bruder gehört?*

(73) *Wer sagt, daß meinem Bruder das Rad[+RH] gehört?*

It seems, however, that a structure such as (72) can easily be
accommodated in such a context that *das Rad* is focus (rhematic)
as well as topic. See above all Höhle (1983) for an extensive
discussion of this issue of grammatically motivated and sty-
listically motivated word order phenomena.

Note, finally, that the question whether German is to be
described within the framework of trace theory as proposed by
Den Besten (see (68) above) has to remain an unsolved issue as
long as we are faced with the wide range of alternative word
order versions, which seem to point in a non-configurational
direction as far as the German middle field is concerned.

4. Word order restrictions of a pragmatic-encyclopaedic sort?

In an attempt to explain the word order phenomena in German
on a more general basis, Lötscher (1981) refutes the structural
explanations set up by Lenerz (1977). His first refutation con-
cerns the serialisation of PO + DO, which according to Lenerz

is of unmarked status (both NP's of the same weight of topicality).

> (74) *Armut hindert an der geistigen Entwicklung Kinder.
>
> (75) *Der Angriff der Hunnen hat zum Rückzug die Goten gezwungen.
>
> (76) *Die Polizei ist da, um gegen Räuber Leute zu schützen.
>
> (77) *Der Konzernchef wollte zu seiner Geburtstagparty die Arbeiter einladen.
>
> (78) *Ich suche jemanden, der in das Japanische den Werther übersetzen könnte.

No doubt, (74) to (78) proves that the serialisation PO + DO is excluded under the premiss that both functions have the same status of topic or focus. Now, note (79)-(84).

> (79) *Hans verdient sein Geld damit, da er Wildlederschuhe aus Plastik herstellt.
>
> (80) *Da hörte ich eine tolle Geschichte von Peter.
>
> (81) *Der Bettler bekam einen 100-M-Schein von einem Gauner.
>
> (82) *Die Behörden geben Hauszelte an Wohnungssuchende ab.
>
> (83) *Torheit wäre es, Voraussicht von Politikern zu erwarten.
>
> (84) *Damit die Besucher sich abends nichts verirren, müssen wir eine Lampe an einen Baum hängen.

These examples reverse the conclusion which is to be drawn from the previous examples: the serialisation DO + PO is excluded. Not only does this set of phenomena disprove Lenerz general restriction, but it also settles Lötscher with the task to find a totally independent set of parameters to account for these distributions (Lötscher 1981: 53f.). This is what Lötscher comes up with: given two NP's in the middle field of equal topic or focus status, the NP with one or more of the following characteristics has to be topicalised:

(a) Agent

(b) subject

(c) carrier of a relation (for example, the one that hates, the one that loves, the one that needs something; not, however, the hated one, the loved one, the needed one), obviously the theme for the group comprising among others bekommen von, hören von;

(d) cause: with verbs such as *herstellen aus*;

(e) center of identification;

(f) participant in a relation (prior to the referent of a relation); see (85)-(88)

> (85) *Der Zauberer verwandelte in einen Frosch einen Minister.*
>
> (86) *Die Verhältnisse machten zum Räuber den Bankangestellten.*
>
> (87) *Im Frühling werden zu Schmetterlingen Puppen.*
>
> (88) *Im Frühling werden Schmetterlinge aus Puppen.*

(g) the one that threatens (prior to the one that is threatened): *schützen vor, helfen gegen;*

(h) what remains unchanged (prior to what changes);

(i) material of which something is made (prior to the end product);

(k) original identity (prior to changed identity);

(l) point of departure (prior to endpoint):

> (89) *Am Montag fuhr die Queen nach Genf von Bern.*

(m) the whole (prior to its parts)

> (90) *Wir müssen in sieben Stücke einen Kuchen teilen.*
>
> (91) *Unglücklicherweise platzte ein Reifen einem Lastwagen.*

(n) the carrier of a name (prior to the one after which it is named);

> (92) *Es ist erstaunlich, wie dem Alten Fritz Max gleicht.*
>
> (93) *Müllers tauften nach dem Bundestrainer Helmut ihren Sohn.*

What Lötscher, then, appeals to in his attempt to find general parameters for the linearization of the elements in the German middle field is a number of iconistic principles. Such a solution seems plausible in the absence of other, functional or categorial, determinants of linearization. Formulating a set of restrictions in terms of such "world orders" would furthermore be a clear indication of an non-configurational characteristic, at least as far the sentential organisation and, in particular, the verbal complex is concerned. In other words, it would be an additional proof (to Haider's claims) that there is no VP in German and that the subject is governed by the verbal predicate just like any other object in a sentence, including certain prepositional objects.

However, it can be shown that there is one structural property playing a regulating role in the examples above that has been overlooked by Lötscher. The NP that has been moved away from the verb (in its sentence-final position in the subordinate clause: thus assuming SOV as the underline order for German) is, with the exception of a very small number of specific cases, in the semantic role of *theme*, or it is in a predicative relation with the main verb. This explains what seems to be the dilemmatic difference between (74)-(78) and (79)-(84). Note that the majority of the prepositional objects in (74)-(78) is in such a narrow predicative relation to the verb as to yield a "Funktionsverbgefüge": *zum Rückzug zwingen, ins Japanische übersetzen, vor/gegen Räuber(n) schützen, zu (einer Party) einladen, an (der Entwicklung) hindern*. The categorial status of this propositional phrase is $(PO,\bar{V})$. In other words, the prepositions are not used freely in their local or temporal meaning, but are used in full and idiomatic dependence from the main verb. This is why the linearization PO + DO is excluded, which, if we abstract from the assignment of focus to just one of the elements, is in contradiction to (6) and (9) above. In (79)-(84), on the other hand, the DO obtains the semantic role of theme, which is but a specific case of a predicative element. This is usually DO, although not without exception, as we have seen in the cases (74)-(79). On account of their semantic proximity to the verb, elements with predicative status are usually verb-next, unless they are under the control of explicit discourse signals such as an asymmetric focus- or topic assignment. Note furthermore that the prepositions in (79)-(84) are free in contrast to those in (74)-(78): their meaning is a strongly local one.

This line of explanation holds also for (c)-(k) and (n) from Lötscher's list of world order properties and the illustrating examples. (n), specifically, obtains also for the verbs *heißen, nennen, schimpfen (ich schimpfte ihn eine Nachgeburt), ansehen als, betrachten als, halten für*. The oblique or prepositional NP is a predicative with respect to the main verb and consequently an integral part of the semantic and syntactic characteristic of the verb. Its constituency in categorial terms is $(V/\{AdjP, PredNP\})/NP \rightarrow tVP$ with the categorial index X, t/e) for the predicative element.

It does not seem necessary to assume that for the examples
listed under (1) an iconistic principle is at work, either.
Note that directional verbs of the type of *fahren* are always
terminative verbs and not "source verbs": they require semantic-
ally a preposition denoting the point of arrival such as in
fahren nach (in contrast to **fahren von*). Note that *Berlinfahrer*
and *Butterfahrer* inevitably denote *Fahrer nach Berlin* (never
Fahrer von Berlin) or *Fahrer um Butter*, just like the DO-compound
nouns *Wienbesucher* or *Holzsammler*. Likewise, *teilen* in (m) has
a predicative prepositional object *in sieben Stücke*. The free
dative in **es platzte ein Reifen einem Lastwagen* may never
yield DO + IO, much in accordance with a restriction that holds
just as well for the valency-dependent IO. DO, *ceteris paribus*,
is the first candidate for predicative status unless this rela-
tion is overruled by the specific semantics of the verb or by
stronger discourse signals.

Note that the serializations in (79)-(84) are all acceptable
in the case that the two NP's are taken to be one NP constituent,
i.e. that the prepositional phrase is a determinant of the
antecedent NP. It is much easier to parametrize the lineariza-
tion within NP-structure in German. But as we stated above this
is not our topic in this article.

5. NP-linearization with unequal focus distribution

While, in principle, it is not impossible to imagine sentences
with two NP's to function with equal focus weight, the discourse
function of such sentences is highly limited to what is very
similar to the presentative sentences. Their function in dis-
course is more complex than that with an unequal distribution
of focus. Yet, the investigation of such equal focus distribu-
tion is of value, as we have seen, insofar as in the absence of
explicit discourse signals it is the semantics of the verb that
is set free for syntactic consequences in full force. We have
seen that we had to modify the restrictions set up above all
by Lenerz for an unbalanced focus distribution.

Let us now turn back to Lötscher's examples under an equally

unbalanced focus distribution. Our interest will in the first
place be to see whether the main rule "predicative element is
verb proximate" has to be modified.

5.1. Focus on the antecedent NP or PP: [+RH] + [-RH]

(94) *In Italien gefällt das Essen[+RH] meinem Vater[-RH].

(95) *Mach meinem Dafürhalten würde eine Badekur[+RH] diesem
Kranken helfen.

(96) *Eigentlich wollte ich eine rosa Krawatte[+RH] Max
schenken.

(97) *Auf dem Hochland begegnete meiner Tante[+RH] Macbeth.

(98) *Als wir von der Party heimkamen, kroch aus einem
Gully[+RH] der Dinosaurier heraus.

(99) *Wir produzieren aus Plastik[+RH] unsere Wildlederschuhe.

Note that we can stick to our structural explanation: the
subject is the only theme in (94) and (95). In (96), the theme
is DO since the subject is agentive. The PO in (98) is a predi-
cative: note the congruency between the verbal prefix *heraus*
and the valency-bound proposition *aus*. To account for (98) we
do not have to formulate a movement restriction such as *PO[+RH] +
DO[-RH] (see Lenerz 1977: 66, 68), which would be in a rare rela-
tion to the restriction *DO[+RH] + PO[+RH] to hold on account of
(49) to (84). Rather, what counts in these collocations is the
predicative status of PO in (89) just as well as the non-predi-
cative status of PO in (79)-(84). Likewise, in (97) the IO is a
predicative, such as in a number of symmetric verbs (*ähneln,
gleichen, treffen;* the latter verb shows that the predicative
status is independent of surface case!).

5.2. Focus on the postcedent NP: [-RH] + [+RH]

(100) *Offenbar hat Emils Wahl zum Bundespräsidenten eine
Gruppe von Ölscheichs[+RH] hintertrieben.

(101) *Heute hat über den Streich sich ein Nach[+RH] geärgert.

(102) *Es scheint, daß das Telefongespräch ein Kurzschluß[+RH]
unterbrochen hat.

(103) *Der Angriff hat zum Rückzug die Goten[+RH] gezwungen.

(104) *Max lehrte Auto fahren seine Schwester[RH].

(105) *Die Polizei beschränkt sich darauf, gegen Räuber Haus-
besitzer[+RH] zu schützen.

(106) *Die Hunnen wollten zum Kaiser Attila[+RH] machen.

(107) *Katastrophal ist es, wenn ein Pneu einem Auto[+RH]
platzt.

(108) *Am Montag ist die Queen nach Genf von Bern[+RH] ge-
fahren.

(100) is excluded by Lenerz' restriction: the agent must not be
the postcedent irrespective of the focus distribution. (101),
(103), (105), and (106) can be explained by the filter PO +
((Subj v DO)[+RH]) in case PO is a predicative. This, in short,
amounts to the restriction that the predicative must not be
verb-distal irrespective of the focus distribution. The predi-
cative is categorially focussed and as such overrules the
discourse status of focus. I would claim that this modifies
the restrictions set up by Lenerz (1977: 66,68) in a crucial and
explanatory way. (104) is subject to the agent restriction (ir-
respective of its focus status): Auto is a predicative function
for the verbal complex Auto fahren (also autofahren). The dative
in (107) is a possessive, free dative belonging to ein Pneu: it
cannot have thematic status. fahren in (108) is a terminative-
directional verb and consequently takes the end-point determi-
nant as its semantically motivated predicative.

Predicatives, as we have seen, are modifiers to the verb and
cannot be positionally separated from the verb, neither under
grammatical conditions nor under discourse conditions.

6. Conclusion

Our findings seem to warrant the following conclusions:

6.1. "Predicative" is a syntactic cover term for different
semantically-lexically motivated categories. It can be instan-
tiated in terms of different grammatical categories.

6.2. Word order, consequently, is lexically motivated in the

German middle field. The ergativity case which, as Den Besten
has claimed, yields a structural solution is but a subcase
under the more general, unstructural solution.

6.3. Given that the predicative is verb-proximal, then it is a
distinguished focus category, namely, as we have seen, under
the specification of discourse assignment as well as under
strictly grammatical, structural, conditions.

6.4. The general rule that the focus element is verb-proximal
(with V-last in German) holds for unmarked conditions. Focus
can also be topicalised unless it is a PO; see (6) and (9).
Prepositions, thus, seem to play a strongly syntactic role in
interrelation with the verb meaning. This, however, still needs
further exploration and confirmatory evidence.

6.5. It is important to see that it is not valency that is of
any importance in the linearizing process, but rather the
distinction between verb modifying constituents and other con-
stituents.

6.6. Parts of the grammar of German such as the linearizing
properties are obviously determined solely by lexically moti-
vated properties. The two cover terms *theme* and *predicative*
are not independent of one another: *theme* is one of the several
defining categories of the functional-semantic concept of
predicatives.

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