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A comparative survey: German – V2 and partially OV

1.1 The V2 property of Germanic languages

A common feature of all Germanic languages,¹ except English, is the so-called *V2 property*: the *finite* verb is the *second* constituent (whence ‘V2’), following an *arbitrary, single, clause-initial constituent*. Pattern (1) is the general V2 pattern. Unless XP is a *wh*-phrase, the instantiations of (1) yield a declarative clause. If XP is a *wh*-phrase, the clause is interrogative.

- (1) [XP_(i) [V_{fin} [... (e_i) ...]]]

The XP constituent in the V2 structure (1) of a declarative may be any phrase that is available for fronting into the XP position in the given language (see 2). As an alternative to fronting a constituent, the XP slot in (1) may be filled with an expletive (see 3). Just for this reason, the subscript ‘i’ on the XP and the trace ‘e_i’ are in brackets in the structure (1).

- (2) a. [*Eine Maus*_i [hat [heute e_i den Käse verschmäht]]]
 [a mouse [has [today the cheese disdained]]]
 b. [*Den Käse*_i [hat [heute eine Maus e_i verschmäht]]]
 c. [*Heute*_i [hat [e_i eine Maus den Käse verschmäht]]]
 d. [*Verschmäht*_i [hat [heute eine Maus den Käse e_i]]]
 e. [[*Den Käse verschmäht*]_i [hat [heute eine Maus e_i]]]

¹ Present-day Germanic standardized languages: Afrikaans, Danish, Dutch, English, Faroese, Frisian, German, Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish. English, a language of Germanic origin, is exceptional. It does not share the typical Germanic clause structure property, viz. V2. Note that this list of languages names just the ‘official’ languages. There are numerous so-called Germanic dialects, each of which is a language in itself.

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- (3) [Es [hat [heute jede Maus den Käse verschmäht]]]²
 [it [has [today every mouse the cheese disdained]]]

In (2d), a single non-finite verb is the first constituent. It represents a verbal projection, though. In (2e), the fronted constituent is a verb phrase. The XP slot is a slot for phrasal constituents; the V_{fin} slot, however, is open only for *atomic* finite verbal elements.

Clauses with a particle verb provide a minimal pair context for illustrating this difference. In German, the particle + verb combination³ is split when the *finite* verb is placed into the fronted position. In this case, the particle is obligatorily stranded. In (4a), the finite verb strands the particle in the clause-final verb position as a consequence of fronting the *atomic* verbal element. The particle must be stranded (see 4c), because only an *atomic* verbal element is accepted in the fronted position of the finite verb. In (4b), an infinitival particle verb is ‘topicalized’, that is, fronted to the XP position. In this case, the particle must not be stranded (4d). The atomic verb is obviously not qualified for the XP as this is a position for a *phrasal* category. The XP slot is a phrasal one. Particle stranding is the result of splitting off the atomic verbal partner of the particle verb combination.

- (4) a. [Er [*stand*_i [*nicht auf*-e_i]]]
 he stood not up
 b. [*Aufstehen*_j [*würde*_i [*er nicht e_j e_i*]]]
 up-stand would he not
 c. * Er *auf*stand nicht
 d. * Stehen würde er nicht *auf*

The only context in which the initial XP in (1) may be preceded by another constituent is that of *left dislocation* (5a). The left-dislocated phrase precedes the XP position, is pre-adjoined to the clause, and is obligatorily associated with a resumptive element (R) that agrees with the left-dislocated constituent. The resumptive is a demonstrative pronoun. The resumptive appears in the spec position (5a,c)

² Note that German does not show a definiteness effect in this construction. Compare this with English:

- (i) There is a /*the /*every mouse in the kitchen

A definiteness effect is operative only in topicalized VPs that contain the subject, as noted by Kratzer (1984).

- (ii) [Ein /*der /*dieser /*jeder Generativist unterrichtet]_{VP} hat hier noch nie
 [a / the / this / every generativist taught] has here not ever

³ Note that in OV languages, the particle of particle verbs precedes the verb; in VO languages it follows.

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unless this position is unavailable (5b). In this case, the resumptive occurs in its clause-internal (base) position (5d,e). In (5d), the *wh*-word occupies the spec C position, and in (5e), the position is unavailable, since yes-no questions require a structure with a phonetically empty spec C.

- (5) a. $[_{FP} XP^j [_{FP} R^j [_{V_{fin}} [\dots e_i \dots]]]]^4$
 b. $[_{FP} XP^j [_{FP} YP_{wh} [_{V_{fin}} [\dots R^j \dots]]]]^?$
 c. (Den Käseⁱ), *den*ⁱ hat die Maus gefressen
 (the-ACC cheese) that-ACC has the mouse eaten
 d. (Den Käseⁱ), *wann* hat die Maus *den*ⁱ gefressen?
 (the-ACC cheese) when has the mouse that-ACC eaten
 e. (Den Käseⁱ), hat die Maus *den*ⁱ gefressen?
 (the-ACC cheese) has the mouse that-ACC eaten

The contrast between English and German illustrated in (6) is one between a V2 clause and a clause without the V2 property (6a). The grammatical V2 variants for (6b) are given in (7).

- (6) a. Today, the mouse has disdained the cheese
 b. * Heute, die Maus hat den Käse verschmäht
 today the mouse has the cheese disdained

(6b) is ungrammatical. The two elements preceding the finite verb, namely *heute* and *die Maus* do not form a constituent. Hence only one of them yields a well-formed option for the XP position. What (6b) shows is that fronting an additional phrase to a position either preceding or immediately following the XP is not permitted in German.

The regular V2 variant with *heute* in the XP position is given under (7a). (7b) is the left-dislocation construction, with the resumptive *da* in the XP position.

- (7) a. Heute hat die Maus den Käse verschmäht
 today has the mouse the cheese disdained
 b. Heuteⁱ, daⁱ hat die Maus den Käse verschmäht
 today there has the mouse the cheese disdained

You may try on your own to estimate whether the V2 variant could be derived as a reduced left-dislocation (LD) variant (as was once suggested in the literature). Compare the examples in (8), and you will see easily how (un)successful this account would be.

⁴ Note the convention on sub- and superscripting applied in this book: a *subscripted index* is used for co-indexing a moved constituent with its trace(s); a *superscripted index* is used for co-indexing in binding or agreement relations.

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- (8)
- a. Den Käse, (den) hat die Maus verschmäht
 the-ACC cheese (that-ACC) has the mouse disdained
 - b. *Käse* (*den) hat die Maus fast *keinen* verschmäht
 cheese (that-ACC) has the mouse almost none-ACC disdained
 - c. [*Käse* verschmäht] (*das) hat die Maus *nur meinen*
 cheese disdained (that-ACC) has the mouse only my-one-ACC
 - d. Den Käse, (*den) hat die Maus verschmäht, mit dem ich sie lockte
 the-ACC cheese (that-ACC) has the mouse disdained with which I her
 baited
 - e. Nichts (*das) hat die Maus verschmäht
 nothing (that-ACC) has the mouse disdained
 - f. Jeder, *(der den Witz nicht kannte), *der* hat gelacht
 everybody (who the joke not knew) this-one has laughed

First, split-NP constructions as in (8b,c) are ungrammatical for LD constructions. Interestingly, the split-NP construction is compatible with VP topicalization (8c). This is a hard nut for those who would like to analyse NP splitting in terms of movement plus stranding. Second, relative clause extraposition is incompatible with LD (8d). Third, quantifiers are no target for LD (8e), unless they are restricted (8f). For more data coverage see Haider (1990).

The V2 pattern alternates with the embedded C°-introduced clause pattern for the complements of a class of verbs and nouns. Keep in mind, however, that V2 is never allowed within C°-introduced clauses in German (9c,f) or Dutch, contrasting with Scandinavian languages, as in (10).

- (9)
- a. wenn du glaubst, [*dass* er sich geirrt *habe*]
 if you believe [that he REFL erred has]
 - b. wenn du glaubst, [*er habe* sich geirrt]
 if you believe [he has REFL erred]
 - c. * wenn du glaubst, [*dass* er *habe* sich geirrt]
 - d. die Annahme, [*dass* er sich geirrt *habe*]
 the assumption [that he REFL erred has]
 - e. die Annahme, [*er habe* sich geirrt]
 the assumption [he has REFL erred]
 - f. * die Annahme [*dass* er *habe* sich geirrt]

Note that the class of verbs that allows a V2 complement in German in place of a *dass*-CP is virtually identical with the verb class that allows the dropping of *that* for complements in English. For complements of N, however, English forbids dropping the complementizer in the complement clause in general, while German

CP-internal V2, however, is compatible with the Germanic V2 property (see Vikner 1995), as exemplified in the Scandinavian languages (10b, Danish). CP-internal V2 is strictly ruled out in German and Dutch. In English, you can observe CP-internal V2, but only with the type of topicalization that triggers auxiliary inversion. Note that in this case, *that* must not drop in English (10a).

- The class of verbs that allows the CP-internal V2 variant in place of the standard CP variant in Danish (and other Scandinavian languages) is identical with the class that allows the V2 variant in place of the CP variant in German.⁵

In terms of the familiar Greenbergian OV vs VO categorization, German (like Afrikaans, Dutch and Frisian) is classified as OV. But neither German nor the other languages mentioned above are ‘strict’ OV languages. They are OV only in the *narrow* construal of OV. It is OV in the literal reading, insofar as this refers to the structure of the verb phrase: the *verb* as the head of the VP follows its nominal complements.

In the Germanic OV languages, only V° and A° (plus a handful of exceptional postpositions) are head final; all other heads, lexical as well as functional ones (to be shown in chapter 2 on clause structure) are head initial.

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As for the VP, in a VO language like English and the North Germanic languages, the verb precedes its nominal complements (1a); in an OV language like German, the verb follows its nominal complements (1b).

- (1) a. [*ask* someone something]_{VP}
- b. [*jemanden etwas fragen*]_{VP}
 someone something ask

As for the other major lexical categories, phrases headed by A° are *head final*, but the other phrases are *head initial* in German.

- (2) head-*final* (V°, A°)
- a. [*jemandem etwas zeigen*]_{VP}
 someone something show
- b. * [*zeigen jemandem etwas*]
- c. [*den Kindern / uns unangenehm*]_{AP}
 (for) the children-DAT / us-DAT unpleasant
- d. * [*unangenehm uns / den Kindern*]

The two other major lexical categories (N°, P°) form head-*initial* phrases, namely NP (3a) and PP (3b–e), just as in English. Prepositions⁶ typically select noun phrases as complements (3b). There are only a small number of prepositions that may alternatively select a PP (see the preposition *bis* in 3c), or a clause (3d,e).

- (3) head-*initial* (N°, P°)
- a. [*NP Nachrichten*]_{N°} von mir an dich
 messages from me to you
- b. [*PP in*]_{P°} [das Haus]
 in the house
- c. [*PP bis*]_{P°} [*PP in*]_{P°} [das Haus]]
 till (= up-to) into the house
- d. [*PP ohne*]_{P°} [dass sie es bemerkte]
 without that she it noticed
 ‘without her noticing it’
- e. [*PP ohne*]_{P°} [es bemerkt zu haben]
 without it noticed to have
 ‘without having noticed it’

⁶ There is a very small number of prepositions that alternatively may be used as postpositions, that is, as relation particles that *follow* their complements: *entlang* – along, *wegen* – because of, *zufolge* – according to, *gegenüber* – as against. Only *zufolge* is exclusively postpositional. The others may be used as post- or as prepositions.

1.3 German in comparison with other Germanic languages

The Germanic languages provide a well-structured space of parameter settings of grammars within a single language family. Table 1.1 lists some easily identifiable parametric differences for a sample of Germanic family members, namely, the so-called Germanic standard languages. Other Germanic languages are usually referred to as ‘dialects’, but this is a sociolinguistic rather than a grammar-based distinction. There is no grammar-theoretic basis for this distinction.⁷ A complete list would require entries for isolated varieties of German, for instance ‘Pennsylvania Dutch’ or the linguistic islands in Northern Italy (e.g. the ‘Dodici commune’ = the twelve communities). But there are many more German

Table 1.1 *Some conspicuous (morpho-)syntactic differences among Germanic languages*

Germanic languages	V2 declaratives	OV [–OV] = [+VO]	morphological case paradigm for NP	subject–verb agreement paradigm
English	–	–	–	–/+
Afrikaans	+	+	–	–
Dutch	+	+	–	+
Frisian	+	+	–	+
German	+	+	+	+
Faroese	+	–	+	+
Icelandic	+	–	+	+
Danish	+	–	–	–
Norwegian	+	–	–	–
Swedish	+	–	–	–
Yiddish ⁸	+	+(flexible)	+	+

⁷ The grammar-based differences between Norwegian and Swedish, for instance, are minimal compared to the differences between standard German and a Swiss German ‘dialect’. The former varieties are acknowledged as different languages, the latter are filed as dialects. Similarly, standard Dutch and standard German are taken to be different ‘languages’, but ‘Plattddeutsch’ (literally: ‘flat German’; varieties spoken in North-West Germany) is called a dialect of German although it is much closer to Dutch than to standard German in its grammar.

⁸ Yiddish has conserved a property that all Germanic languages had in their historical ancestors’ grammars: they were neither strictly OV nor strictly VO. The position of the verb was ‘flexible’, not rigid, as in all modern Germanic languages. ‘Flexible’ means that the verb could be placed in the head-final position, or, alternatively, in intermediate positions, or, in the head-initial position. The underspecification of the directionality feature produces this flexibility (see Haider 2005b) that allows OV and VO patterns, plus VP-internal positions. For a detailed discussion of the OV/VO property of Yiddish see Vikner (2001).

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speaking minorities, for instance in Eastern Europe, some of which still use a present-day version of the variety of German their ancestors spoke when they emigrated to the East in the eighteenth century (e.g. the Alemannian variety of the Donauschwaben = Danubian Swabians; in Romania, Hungary and Serbia). So, the table should just be taken as a representative sample of Germanic languages. All Germanic languages, except for English, share the V2 property.⁹ Outside the Germanic family, this property is presently confirmed only for Kashmiri (Wali and Koul 1997; Bhatt 1999).

A conspicuous but still not fully understood feature of the Germanic language family is its diachronic ‘dialect split’ into a VO group (North Germanic) and an OV group (West Germanic: Afrikaans,¹⁰ Dutch, Frisian, German). Contrary to popular wisdom, it clearly does not correlate with the ‘decay’ of the morphological paradigms for the nominal and verbal inflections. In both groups there are on the one hand languages with rich morphological inventories for case marking and verbal inflection for agreement, tense and mood, and on the other hand languages without or with just minimal and deficient inventories.

In the OV group, Afrikaans is the extreme case of lack of morphology (no case morphology, no verbal inflection for agreement), in contrast to German with a rich morphological case paradigm (notably for articles and pronouns).

In the VO group, the continental Scandinavian languages are morphologically poor, without any subject–verb agreement on the finite verb, whereas the insular Scandinavian languages (Icelandic, Faroese) are morphologically rich. Nevertheless, the OV vs VO characteristics are robust and persistent. What this tells us is that morphological change cannot have been a trigger for the syntactic changes that lead to the OV/VO distinction. In chapter 2, the dialect split that led to the OV/VO is argued to be a split in the development from a language with a *flexible* directionality (all Old Germanic varieties and present-day Yiddish) to languages with *rigid* directionality. The switch from ‘flexible’ to ‘rigid’ opened exactly two possible, alternative implementations for ‘rigid’, namely head-final or head-initial order. The choice of the parametric value apparently was a matter of chance. One dialect (group) ended up with the value ‘head initial’. This is the VO group. The other group is one that developed from a mother dialect with the directionality ‘head final’ for the V-projections. As for nouns, particles and (lexical) functional heads (complementizers, articles), all Germanic languages share the head-initial value.¹¹

⁹ English employs the V2 pattern only for *wh*-clauses and a special type of clause with fronted negative quantifiers: ‘With no job *would* he be happy.’ Contrast this with the English declarative pattern: ‘With no job, he would be happy.’

¹⁰ Language of Dutch origin, spoken in South Africa.

¹¹ As an alternative to the article, Scandinavian languages employ a definiteness marker as suffix of the noun. The alternation between article and definiteness marker is not free, though.

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As for English, it is *the* exceptional language, not only within the Germanic language family. It is V2, but only for main clause wh-constructions (and topicalized negative operators). It requires V-to-'I' for the finite verb, but it allows this only for auxiliaries. So, it needs to employ an expletive auxiliary ('do-support') to compensate for the immobility of a finite main verb. It does not allow passivizing an intransitive verb because of the lack of a suitable subject expletive. It has a set of quasi-auxiliaries (modals) that cannot partake in infinitival constructions because they lack the finite vs infinitive distinction. It does not provide an infinitive morphology for the verb but uses the stem only. It has person + number agreement, but only in a highly deficient paradigm (only third person singular, in present tense, except for auxiliaries). Nevertheless, English still serves as *the* model language for grammar theory. This is not detrimental as long as the exceptional qualities of English are recognized and not mistaken as a model of a universal grammar.

1.4 The OV properties of German in contrast to VO properties of English

What do we know, if we know that a language is VO, or if we know it is OV, without knowing details about this language? In other words, what are reliable correlations between the OV vs VO organization of a clause and its grammatical properties? Present-day theorizing focuses primarily on a universal model of clause structure and emphasizes the *shared* properties. The ubiquitous differences between languages are disruptive rather than constitutive elements in this universal grammar account.

In the author's view, languages do not necessarily share a universal clause structure. What they share is a universal set of principles and processes that determine the organization of the grammar of a human language. Because of parameterization, two grammars might be minimally different, differing maybe only in a single parameter value. But if this parameterized principle interacts with enough other principles of grammar and triggers a cascade of effects, the two languages these two grammars account for may appear to be strongly different, depending on the parameter value. Here, we shall briefly analyse the grammatical properties that seem to correlate directly with a single parameter setting, namely the headedness value (head initial, head final), construed as a *directionality* factor of licensing a phrase by a phrasal head. Two premises, you are asked to grant. The rest will follow.

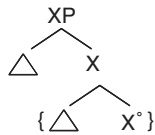
- The *first premise* (P1): positions in the projection of a phrasal head need to be licensed under the *canonical directionality* of the head. Canonical

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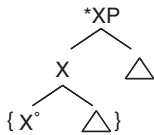
directionality is the basic parametric factor that produces head-final or head-initial structures, respectively.¹²

- The *second premise* (P2): the structural build-up (‘merger’) of phrases is *asymmetric*. It is universally *right branching*:
If a phrase α is merged¹³ to a phrase β , the resulting structure is $[\beta^n \alpha \beta]$. Hence, merger produces *right-branching structures only*. Left-branching merger structures $*[\beta^n \beta \alpha]$ are universally ruled out.¹⁴ This generalization on phrase structuring was originally suggested in Haider (1992/2000).

a. **right-branching**



b. **left-branching (ruled out)**



The curled brackets in the bottom line of the structures above are to signify that the branching restriction is independent of the order of head and complement, that is, head-final or head-initial order, or, as will be discussed later, in phrases with adjustable head positioning.

In combination, the premises P1 and P2 produce a set of corollaries that are characteristic of OV vs VO properties of clause structure. In the next subsection, the respective data are presented. Their relation to the premises above will be derived and discussed in the subsequent subsection.

1.4.1 The OV ‘fingerprints’ of German

The observations listed below are taken to be immediate effects of head-final vs head-initial phrase structure in combination with premise P2. Remember that the German NP is head initial. This provides a handy testing ground for some of the properties under discussion below, since it is easy to derive a deverbal noun: the infinitive can be used as a noun. So, we can inspect the head-initial vs head-final effects in a minimal pair setting within a single language, once we contrast a clause with the deverbal infinitival noun phrase. The following eight observations will be first described and then derived in section 1.4.2.

¹² The idea that directionality is a relevant parametric factor is not a new one. It has been under discussion since the advent of the Principles & Parameter model, for instance in the early work of Hilda Koopman.
¹³ ‘merge α with β ’ =_{def.} combine α with β into a phrase structure $[\gamma \alpha \beta]$, where γ is a projection of either α or β .
¹⁴ This premise applies to merger. It remains silent on the question as to whether there could be a transformational source of left-branching structures, as for instance, adjunction by movement to the right.