Course B4 - Syntactic Structure of German

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Unit 8: Missing subjects, expletives, particles - cues for structural differences

Dutch, English and Scandinavian evidence for obligatorily lexicalized positions and its contrasts with German. Insufficiency of pro-drop accounts. Implications for more far-reaching structural differences.

➔ **Expletives as evidence for (overt) *clause medial* functional head positions**

- ▪ If no spec position, no *EPP-effects* (no structural expletives)
- ▪ If there is a structural expletive, there is a functional spec position.

Claim: German is *not* semi-pro-drop (nor is Dutch or English)

(1) a. Hefur (*Það) rígnt í nótt? (Isl.)   *Icelandic* quasi argument drop
b. Hat *(es) geregnet in der Nacht?   (quasi argument)
c. Hier lebt *(es) sich gut   (intransitive middle construction)
d. War *(es) sehr unangenehm, daß kein Taxi kam?   (extraposition)
e. Wurde getanzt? - Wurde (*es) getanzt - *Es* wurde getanzt (Ge.)   (intransitive passive)
f. daß (*es) getanzt wurde (Ge.) vs. dat *(er) gedanst wordt (Du.)   (intransitive passive)

Comment: In an impersonal passive (1e), an expletive is ungrammatical, not because it is obligatorily dropped (- it would not drop -), but simply because there is no obligatory functional subject position to be filled. In the Spec-C position it is obligatory, however.

(2) a. *In deze hoek* werd (*er*) volgens mij gefluisterd
b. Werd *(*er*) gefluisterd (in deze hoek)   (*Paardekoper 1963, Beknopte ABN Syntaxis*)
c. On this spot (*there*) will stand a huge tower
d. Will *(*there*) stand a huge tower on this spot ?
e. I gräset~gras~ kan~can~ finnas~be-found~ ormar~snakes~ (Sw.) H&P p. 100.

Comment: Dutch or English, but not German, *requires* an expletive element if there is neither a subject nor *a (locative) adverbial*. Why? *Expletive* for a *functional* subject position (EPP).

(3) a. Out of the lecture hall limped a covert pro-drop-troll
b. Out of which lecture hall limped a covert pro-drop-troll?
c.*Out of which lecture hall **did** limp a covert pro-drop-troll?
Comment: The locative PP relates to the *subject position* (Spec-T), because it does not trigger *do*-support in interrogative clauses. It does, however, with '*there*' in the subject position.

⋅⋅

Side remark: What is 'pro-drop'? What is 'semi-pro-drop'?
a. 'Pro-drop' is *clitic-drop* (do not spell out the same features *twice* on the *same position*)
b. 'Semi-pro-drop': do not spell out an argument without *referential* content.
Consequences:
a. Icelandic is not 'pro-drop' because it does not *cliticize* a subject pronoun
b. Italian *cannot* drop in contexts where *cliticization* does not apply: *(Aux-to-Comp, 12a)*
c. Italian and Icelandic are 'semi-pro-drop' languages, Italian is 'pro-drop' too, German is neither (for relevant data contrasts see: Rizzi 1986 *LI*):

(4) a. *Ritengo [essere Ø/Mario/lui simpatico]   b. Ritengo [essere Ø troppo tardi per L.]
,ich-think [be Ø/Maria/he likeable]'   I-think [be (it) too late for L.] *(L.Rizzi)*
⋅⋅

Unit 9: On the relation between OV and VO: OV is more basic than VO

What is an OV property of German, what is the corresponding VO property, and how are these differences accounted for in grammar theory?

➔ **On the relation between ‚OV' and ‚VO'**

How to ***not*** turn VO (=Icelandic) into OV (=German) (by applying LCA: Kayne 1994)
unless you enjoy widespread syntactic collateral damages: see Haider 1997)

(1) a. Ég hef ekki Þekkt *Þessa konu* = ‚front the postverbal *phrase*'
   b. Ég hef *Þessa konu*$_i$ ekki Þekkt e$_i$ or equally unrecommendable
   Ich habe diese Frau nicht gekannt ‚front the *remnant VP'*

How to turn OV (= German) into VO (=Icelandic) (by applying BC: Haider 1992):

(2) a. Ich habe diese Frau gekannt = ‚front the *head* of the VP'
   b. Ich habe *gekannt*$_i$ diese Frau e$_i$
   *Ég hef Þekkt Þessa konu*

1. **Headedness in a universal theory of phrase structure: asymmetric structures**

   ▪ phrases are *endocentric* (= head at the bottom of the phrase)
   ▪ heads are *directional* licensers: progressively or regressively
   ▪ complex projections (and their extension) are *right*-branching (*BC = branching constraint*; details in Haider 1992;1997)
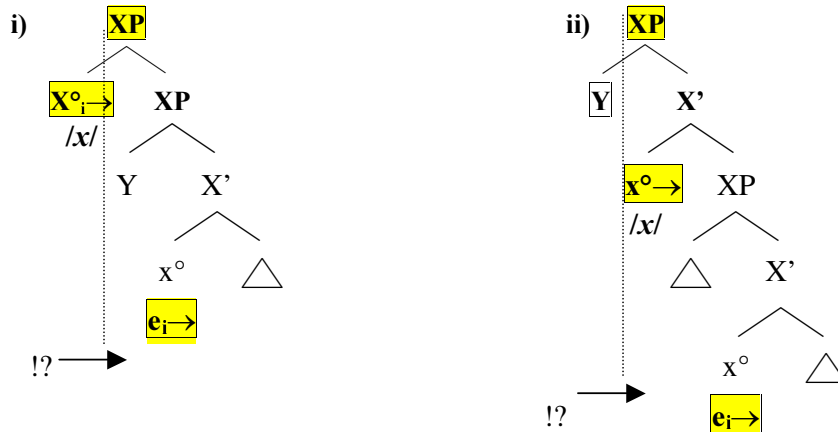
2. **Why?**

   ▪ The grammar is the algorithm for *unfolding* more-dimensional qualities (= syntactic structures) on a one-dimensional representation (= PF-strings as linear arrays) and for *compressing* more-dimensional qualities into a one-dimensional linear array. (Note: reception and production aspect)
   ▪ The data structures provided by the grammar (= compiled knowledge system) do 'not impede parsing' (= effective, *incremental* processing activity)
   ▪ *Incremental* parsing: 'integrate the incoming terminals into the structure already projected' (= provide data structures that do not require look-ahead)
   ▪ Grammar support: Make sure that you can apply *top-down* (grammar driven) **and** *bottom-up* (= data driven) information at each step of construction.
   ▪ Consequence: *left-branching projections and their extensions

(3) a. **right** branching + ⟵ (= **OV**) b. * **left**-branching + ⟶ c. **right**-branching + ⟶
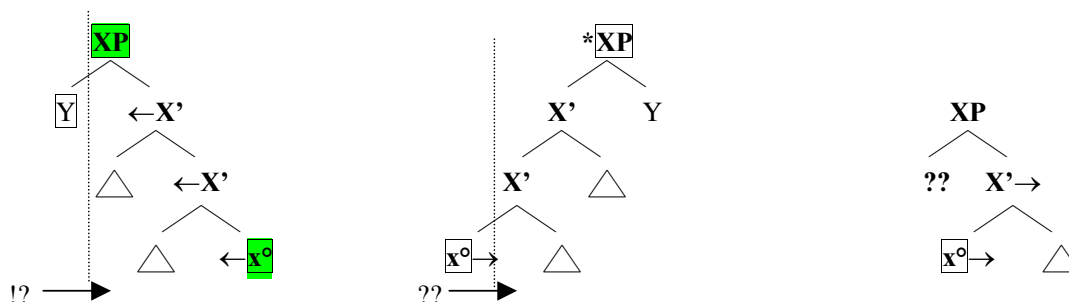
   d. **right**-branching + ⟶ + head-chaining (= **VO**; with VP-shells)

i)

```
          XP
        /    \
   X°ᵢ→      XP
   /x/      /    \
          Y        X'
                 /    \
               x°      △
              ei→
 !? →
```

ii)

```
          XP
        /    \
      Y        X'
             /    \
          x°→      XP
          /x/     /    \
                △        X'
                       /    \
                      x°      △
           !? →      ei→
```

Comment: **i)** Only right-branching structures guarantee incremental parsing without constant back-tracking on the active node (because what follows is *lower*). **ii)** The maximal projection is the first mother node (providing top-down information). **iii)** OV is fine, but the head comes late. **iv)** If the head is to arrive early, the structure gets more complex (head-chaining).

For the sake of illustration: **Particles** as indicators of V-Positions (Haider 97, JCGL):

(4) a. send out, send up, hand in, ...
    b. I sent the clients *out* their mail - I sent *out* the clients their mail
    c. *I sent the clients their mail *out*   **But:**
    d. I sent the clients their mail *out* to their respective holiday resorts
    e. I [sentᵢ [the clients [$V°_i$ [their mail [$v°_i$ *out* [to their respective holiday resorts]]]]]]

Comment: In English (and to a certain degree also in Icelandic and Norwegian, but not in Danish and Swedish) you may strand **or** pied-pipe the particle: The potential stranding positions are the V-positions on the head chain. A particle in absolute clause final position cannot be stranded but must be independent (evidence: intensifiers).

(5) a. Mike tossed me the wrench (right) up
    b. Mike tossed me (*right) up the wrench
    c. He threw the ball right/straight up/back/down
    d.*He threw right/straight up/back/down the ball Dikken (1991:38)

In sum: XV and VX are alternative instantiations of directionality in a BC-constrained structure, with its own costs, though:
    o   simple projection with head in lowest position: = OV. Cost: late head
    o   early head: = VO. Costs: head chain in a simple phrasal projection

Some consequences of the BC

for any language
    o   no head-final functional projections: ⇒ no head movement to the right
    o   no specs following the head: ⇒ no phrasal movement to specs on the right
    o   no adjunction to the right: ⇒ no scrambling to the right, no adjuncts
    o   complex head-initial projections have a shell structure:
                                    ⇒ more particle positions in head-initial VPs

for German:
    o   no clause final functional head position (no V-to-I)
    o   extraposition must be embedding and not movement to the right or right adjunction
    o   obligatory V-clustering (with subsentential V-projections)   End of handout 8-9