

## German clause structure: evidence for Split-CP and its implications for *es*

### 1. Some remarks on German clause structure

#### 1.1 (At least) two subject positions in the *Mittelfeld*

- (1) a. Diesen Satz haben **schon immer** alle Studenten gehaßt.  
This sentence have already always all students hated.
- b. \*Diesen Satz haben **schon immer** die Studenten gehaßt.  
This sentence have already always the students hated.
- c. <sup>?</sup>Diesen Satz haben alle Studenten **schon immer** gehaßt.  
This sentence have all students already always hated.
- d. Diesen Satz haben die Studenten **schon immer** gehaßt.  
This sentence have the students already always hated.

Assuming that adverbs occupy a fixed position, the above examples show that there are at least two subject positions in the *Mittelfeld* in German, one above the adverb and associated with definite subjects (and marginally with indefinite and quantified subjects) and one lower than the adverb and associated with indefinite and quantified subjects, but never with definite subjects.

Following Bobaljik & Jonas (1996) I assume that these positions are SpecAgrSP<sup>1</sup> and SpecTP.<sup>2</sup> Definite subjects have to move to SpecAgrSP (via SpecTP).

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<sup>1</sup> It might be more reasonable to call this position SpecRefP (cf. Koopman & Szabolcsi (2000) and references therein) but labels do not matter for present purposes.

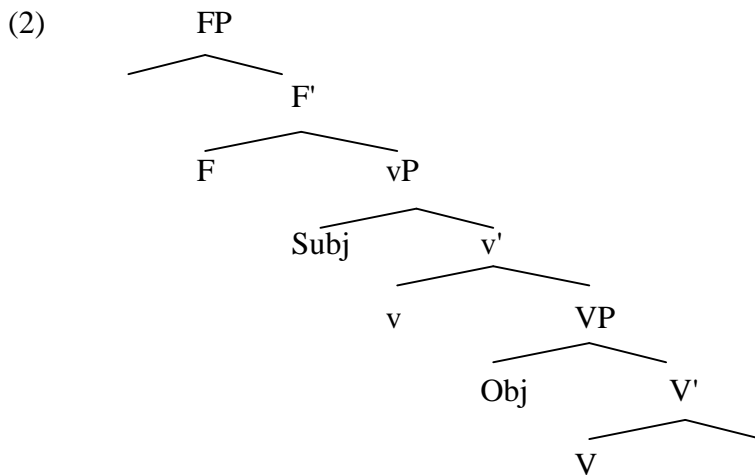
<sup>2</sup> There might be more than two subject positions, one of which might even be the base-position SpecvP (cf. Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou (2001) who suggest that the subject can stay vP-internal as long as the other argument leaves vP, a requirement which is satisfied if the direct object obligatorily undergoes Object Shift in German (see below).

In that case some element other than the subject has to check the EPP on T. Further research is needed here.

## 1.2 The EPP – where does it sit?

In view of the facts observed in 1.1 and again following B&J (1996), I suggest that it is T that has an EPP-feature, not AgrS. In German, this EPP-feature is checked by the subject moving to or through SpecTP.

B&J (1996) establish a link between licensing of SpecTP as a subject position and Object Shift. They say that SpecTP is licensed as a subject position (allowing the EPP-feature to be checked by the subject in SpecTP) in languages that have Object Shift. Assuming that the structure (2) given in Roberts (2000) is the underlying structure of all languages, it is obvious that direct objects in German obligatorily undergo Object Shift because there is no other way to derive OV-order from (2).



So the object has to move to some functional projection above vP. This first step of object-movement is Object Shift (cf. Hinterhölzl 2000, Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1997), probably triggered by the need to check Case. The object can, however, move on if this is required by interpretational needs. This further movement is Scrambling and probably targets some Focus-position in the *Mittelfeld* (cf. Hinterhölzl 2000).<sup>3</sup>

In addition to this universal EPP on T, German (as well as the other Germanic V2-languages) has an EPP-feature on Fin (see below), which leads to V2.

To account for the V-movement facts observed in the Germanic V2-languages, I adopt a

<sup>3</sup> There remains a problem: Some languages (e.g. Icelandic, Dutch) which have Object Shift and therefore license SpecTP as a subject position seem to have an additional EPP on AgrS as these languages require the presence of an expletive in constructions where an expletive must not show up in German and because these languages display a Definiteness Effect.

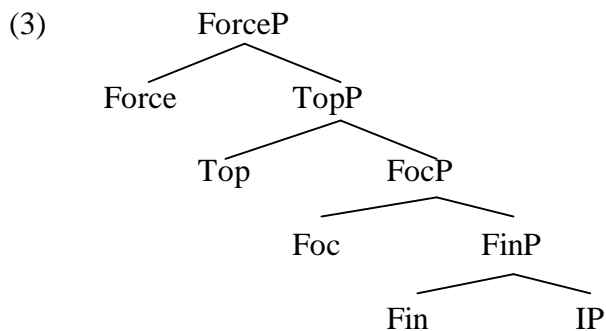
mechanism developed in Roberts & Roussou (1998).

Fin is associated with the diacritic \* (similar to Holmberg's (2000) [P]-feature) which requires phonological realisation of Fin. If Fin\* is satisfied by Merge, e.g. in embedded clauses by merging the complementiser *daß*, everything is fine. However, if Fin\* is satisfied by Move, by V-movement to be more precise, then Fin has an EPP-feature (cf. Roberts 2000).<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Split-CP

The analysis developed here is a kind of compromise between the asymmetric approach to V2 (i.e. subject-initial main clauses are IPs, while non-subject-initial clauses are CPs, cf. Travis 1984, Zwart 1997) and the symmetric approach (i.e. all V2-clauses are CPs, cf. Vikner 1995, Schwartz & Vikner 1996).

I want to argue that V2 uniformly is a phenomenon of the C-system but that it involves different phrases within the Split-CP (3).



(Rizzi 1997)

There is, however, good evidence that we do not simply have the dichotomy "subject vs. all other possible XPs" but that we need a finer-grained distinction.

- (4)
- a. Der Minister übernahm die Verantwortung für den Skandal.  
The minister accepted the responsibility for the scandal.
  - b. Diesen Minister hat die Presse schon lange kritisiert.  
This-ACC minister has the press already long criticised.
  - c. Heute hat es ohne Unterlaß geregnet. (Haider 1993)  
Today has it without interruption rained.

<sup>4</sup> If V-movement is triggered by Fin\* head-movement really seems to be a PF-phenomenon.

- d. OHNE UNTERLASS hat es heute geregnet. (Haider 1993)  
Without interruption has it today rained.
- e. Unter diesen Umständen kann ich nicht arbeiten.  
Under these conditions can I not work.
- (5) a. Peter liebt Maria.  
Peter loves Maria.
- b. PETER liebt Maria.
- c. Den Peter liebt Maria.  
The-ACC Peter loves Maria.
- (6) a. Die Regierung betrachtet das Volk als korrupt.  
The government considers the people as corrupt.
- b. Das Volk betrachtet die Regierung als korrupt.  
The people considers the government as corrupt.

As one can see in (4) - (6), some XPs, namely

- subjects (4a)
  - (probably<sup>5</sup>) objects which are unambiguously marked as such by means of morphological Case (4b)
  - adverbs which create a setting, esp. some temporal and locative adverbs<sup>6</sup> (4c)
- can show up in sentence-initial position having "neutral stress and interpretation".<sup>7</sup> I assume that these XPs occupy SpecFinP.

Other adverbs, esp. adverbial PPs (4d,e) can only occur in sentence-initial position if they are stressed (contrastive stress), topicalised or forced by any other discourse requirement to show up in this position.

Objects which are not unambiguously marked as such by morphological Case (or objects in

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<sup>5</sup> The demonstrative might indicate that even in this case we have an object that carries a Top/Foc-feature (see below).

<sup>6</sup> Probably all those adverbs that fall into Frey & Pittner's (1998) categories of *Bereichsadverbiale* and *Frameadverbiale*.

<sup>7</sup> Of course, all these XPs CAN be stressed or topicalised, hence occur in one of the higher Specifiers, SpecFocP and SpecTopP respectively.

- (4') a. Der MINISTER übernahm die Verantwortung (nicht der Kanzler).  
The minister accepted the responsibility (not the chancellor).
- b. DIESEN Minister (nicht jenen) hat die Presse schon lange kritisiert.  
This minister (not that one) has the press already long criticised.
- c. HEUTE hat es ohne Unterlaß geregnet (nicht gestern).  
Today has it without interruption rained (not yesterday).

general, cf. footnote 5) have to be marked in some other way (stress<sup>8</sup> and topicalisation) to be able to show up in sentence-initial position.<sup>9</sup> This is illustrated by the examples in (5) and (6): In (5a) and even in (5b), where it is stressed, *Peter* can only be interpreted as the subject/agent of the sentence. Only when one adds the article (which is clearly accusative and which as a by-product forces the whole NP to be stressed) *Peter* will be interpreted as the direct object/beneficiary.

In (6), both NPs, *die Regierung* and *das Volk*, could be either nominative or accusative but one will almost always get the reading in which the sentence-initial NP is the "considerer", i.e. the sentence-initial NP gets the default interpretation "subject" and even focussing does not have any influence on interpretation. However, people might accept an object-reading for *die Regierung* in (6a) because it is part of our knowledge of the world that usually people consider the government corrupt and that it is not the other way round. In (6b) on the other hand, there are no semantic reasons that favour or even force an object-reading of *das Volk*.

In view of these facts I assume that these XPs can only go into sentence-initial position if they carry a Top/Foc-feature<sup>10</sup> and therefore target SpecTopP or SpecFocP respectively (moving through SpecFinP and checking Fin's EPP-feature).

**Table 1**

	SpecTopP/SpecFocP <sup>11</sup>	SpecFinP
subject NPs	✓	✓
unambiguous object NPs	✓	✓
adverbs which create a setting	✓	✓
ambiguous object NPs <sup>12</sup>	✓	X
other adverbs, PPs, etc.	✓	X

<sup>8</sup> In many constructions, stress alone won't do as (5b) and (6) show.

<sup>9</sup> This finer-grained system and the distribution of the various types of XPs within this system holds for Norwegian as well (Arne Lindstad, p.c.).

<sup>10</sup> I won't distinguish between Topic- and Focus-features here, because the mechanism is exactly the same no matter whether the NP in question targets SpecTopP or SpecFocP. The crucial point is that they carry an extra feature and target a position higher than SpecFinP.

<sup>11</sup> All XPs have to be associated with a Top/Foc-feature to be able to occur in this position.

<sup>12</sup> Note that I predict that in languages which do not have morphological Case objects can never show up in SpecFinP. This seems to hold for Norwegian. (Arne Lindstad, p.c.)

### 3. *Es* in sentence-initial position

#### 3.1 Pronominal *es*

The question of why weak object pronouns cannot occur in sentence-initial position (7a' vs 7b') has been a topic of much research (for an overview see Schwartz & Vikner (1996)).

- (7) a. Das Mädchen hat sich den Arm gebrochen.  
The girl has REFL the arm broken.
- a'. Es hat sich den Arm gebrochen.  
It has REFL the Arm broken.
- b. Das alte Brot hat er an die Pferde verfüttert.  
The stale bread has he to the horses fed.
- b'. \*Es hat er an die Pferde verfüttert.  
It has he to the horses fed.

As I have argued above, NPs that are ambiguous (i.e. either Nom or Acc) will always receive the default/subject interpretation unless they are stressed and probably disambiguated by some discourse-feature. As *es* has the same form in the Nom and Acc it would have to be stressed to get an object-reading, but being a weak pronoun *es* cannot be stressed and has to be interpreted as Nom. Therefore we can never get a weak object pronoun in sentence-initial position.

#### 3.2 Expletive *es*

The *es*-construction does not lead to a Definiteness Effect (DE) in German, at least not to a strict one. The only requirement is that the subject be rather specific (cf. Haerberli 1999). So (8a) is ungrammatical because the subject is not specific enough, whereas (8b, c) are perfectly fine.

- (8) a. \*Es kam der Mann.  
It came the man.
- b. Es kam der Pfarrer.  
It came the priest.
- c. Es kommt der Mann, über den wir gerade gesprochen haben.  
It comes the man about whom we just spoken have.

The absence of a DE in German supports the idea that in German the expletive is merged only in SpecFinP to satisfy Fin's EPP-feature and does NOT move from SpecAgrSP to SpecFinP. Instead, the subject checks the EPP of T and, if definite, moves on to SpecAgrSP. As the "lower" EPP will always be checked directly in TP and as the subject can occupy SpecAgrSP there is (a) no need for *es* to be merged in SpecAgrSP and (b) possibly no way for *es* to be merged in SpecAgrSP. Therefore it is simply merged in SpecFinP.

The requirement that the associate NP be rather specific can be explained as follows. *Es*-constructions create a presentational context/arethetic judgements and therefore have to convey a certain amount of information.

Interestingly enough, the *here-comes-...* construction in English (and probably Locative Inversion in general) patterns exactly like the *es*-construction wrt specificity requirements and DE<sup>13</sup>, whereas the *there*-construction leads to a DE but does not require specific NPs.

- (9) a. \*Here comes the man.  
 b. Here comes the priest.  
 c. Here comes the man we have been talking about.
- (10) a. There arrives a man.  
 b. \*There arrives the priest.

However, this parallelism and difference is not so surprising as it may look. Locative Inversion is usually analysed as a V2-construction, i.e. as targeting the C-domain.<sup>14</sup> So, as in the *es*-construction, the subject moves to SpecAgrSP (therefore no definiteness effect) and *here* goes into SpecFinP. The specificity requirement is again imposed by the presentational context.

The *there*-construction on the other hand, can be analysed as involving the I-domain only. The subject stays in a low position (probably SpecvP) and therefore is subject to a DE and expletive *there* is merged in SpecAgrSP to check the EPP-feature (which has moved with T to AgrS, cf. Bobaljik & Jonas 1996).

<sup>13</sup> Thanks to Peter Svenonius (p.c.) for pointing this out to me.

<sup>14</sup> Collins (1997) points out that Locative Inversion and Quotative Inversion are the only instances where the verb moves out of vP in English.

#### 4. Some speculations about impersonal passives

The framework developed above allows for an explanation of why, in German, we can get impersonal passives of unergatives but not of unaccusatives and possibly why English does not allow for any impersonal passives at all.

Adopting Hale & Keyser's (1993) analysis that unergative verbs are always associated with a(n abstract) cognate object, we can say that in impersonal passives like (11) the EPP on T is checked by the cognate object (which like any other object turns into a derived subject when the verb is passivised). *Es* and *gestern* respectively are merged in SpecFinP to satisfy Fin's EPP.

- (11) a.     Es wurde (ein Tanz) getanzt.  
          It was (a dance) danced.
- b.     Gestern wurde (ein Tanz) getanzt.  
          Yesterday was (a dance) danced.

In unaccusative constructions, however, the single argument of the verb is demoted<sup>15</sup> by passivisation and therefore there is no argument left – not even an abstract one – to check T's EPP-feature<sup>16</sup> and the derivation crashes.

- (12)       \*Es wurde angekommen.

In English, however, the expletive is merged in SpecAgrSP (because English is no longer a V2 language) and blocks movement of the cognate object to this position ("Merge over Move"). As (13a/b) are ungrammatical, I have to assume that the cognate object cannot be licensed in object position.

- (13) a.     \*It was danced (a dance).
- b.     \*There was danced (a dance).
- c.     There was dancing.

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<sup>15</sup> The implicit agent does not play any role in EPP-checking in any case of passivisation.

<sup>16</sup> Here it is crucial to assume that the I-system is a phase because only then *es* is in a different subarray and cannot be merged in SpecTP – or we have to assume that *es* has not the relevant features to check the EPP on T anyway.



The cognate object is probably not licensed because *it/there* checks Case and the cognate object possibly cannot be associated with partitive Case either. In view of (13c), which is the English equivalent of impersonal passives, one could suggest that the cognate object undergoes incorporation because English does not provide enough functional projections for the cognate object to move to and be licensed. (Further research is required here.) Hence there is no way to derive impersonal passives in English because English is no longer a V2 language, i.e. the expletive cannot be merged in SpecFinP.

At first it looks as though it should be possible to derive impersonal passives of unaccusatives in English because no element competes with the expletive for SpecAgrSP but other requirements are not met. *There* needs an associate NP (Chomsky 1995) and *it* either has to go together with a clausal argument or has to be a quasi-argument. None of these requirements is met in unaccusative impersonal passive constructions. Hence we cannot derive impersonal passives in English at all.

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