THE SUBJECT POSITION IN ENGLISH & GERMAN: THE EPP FEATURE, NOMINATIVE CASE ASSIGNMENT & THE TP DOMAIN

by

EKARINA WINARTO

(Under the Direction of Vera Lee-Schoenfeld)

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the subject position in German and compares this to the English "Fixed" Spec TP allocation for the subject. It will be shown that the subject in German does not have a fixed position in the sentence structure and that Spec TP is always empty in German. The questions that this raises in regards to the EPP feature and nominative case assignment are addressed, and lastly the possibility of German as a TP-less language is discussed. In this thesis, a more cartographic approach in line with X-bar Theory is assumed, but minimalist approaches will also be touched on.

INDEX WORDS: Linguistics, Germanic Linguistics, syntax, subject position, EPP feature, V2 construction, nominative case assignment, TP domain

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CHAPTER 1

THE SUBJECT POSITION IN GERMAN

German has an underlying Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) structure while English has an underlying Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) structure, but both languages can seem to have a similar structure in main clauses, especially in simple neutral sentences like 1 and 2.

1. I am going to Munich tomorrow.
2. Ich fahre morgen nach München.

   I drive tomorrow to Munich

   " I am driving to Munich tomorrow."

Both sentences above clearly have an SVO structure, but upon further observation, if we have topicalizations, then we get a different structure in German and English.

3. Tomorrow, I am going to Munich.
4. Morgen fahre ich nach München.

   Tomorrow drive I to Munich

   "Tomorrow, I am driving to Munich."

From sentence 3, we see clearly that English strictly adheres to its SVO structure, putting the topicalized adverb *tomorrow* before the subject. In sentence 4, however, we get the topicalized adverb *morgen* right before the verb *fahre* with the subject *ich* coming after the verb. The following are examples of more topicalization in German.

5. Am Freitag ist die Mittagspause länger.

   On Friday is the lunch break longer

   "The lunch break is longer on Fridays."

6. Im Straβencafe fühlt sie sich nicht ganz wohl.

   In street cafe feels she not very good.

   "She doesn't feel very comfortable in the café."

7. 1917 gründete er zusammen mit Max Reinhardt und Richard Strauss die Salzburger

   1917 built he together with Max Reinhardt and Richard Strauss the Salzburg

   Festspiele.

   Festival

   "He started the Salzburg Festivals in 1917 together with Max Reinhardt and Richard Strauss."

8. Ein Jahr lang vermietet Herr Altenkirch eins seiner kleinen Zimmer an eine Dramaturgin

   One year long rents Mr. Altenkirch one of his small rooms to a theater

   vom Theater.

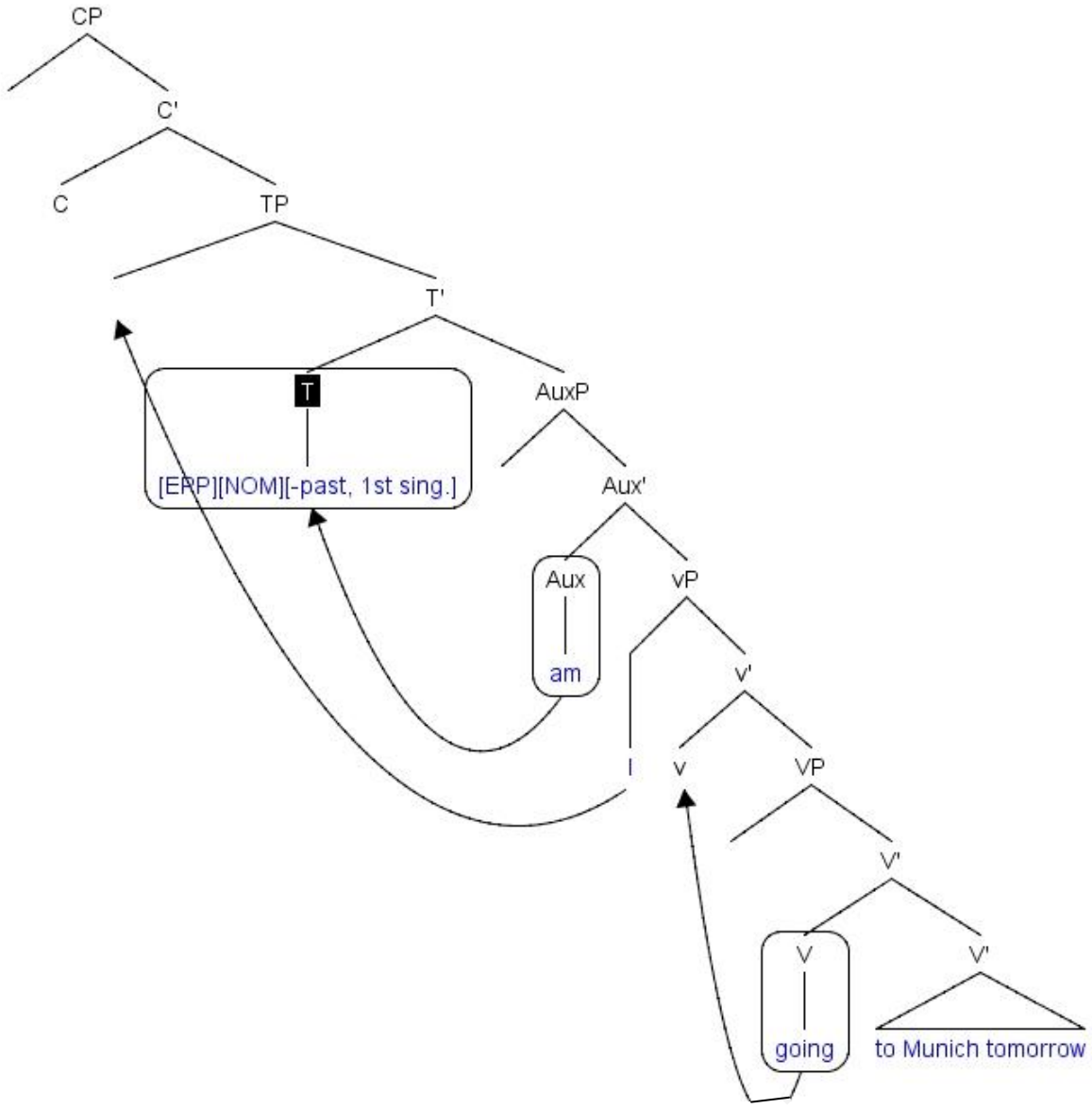
   Person

   "Mr. Altenkirch rents out one of his small rooms year long to a theater person."

[Kaleidoskop 8th Ed.]

In sentences 5-8, we see that the sentences do not start with the subject and that the subjects have an "inverted" relationship with the verbs, coming after and not before the verbs. Thus, we can say that even in main clauses, German just has a "verb-second" (V2) structure, not a strictly SVO one like English. This means that while English has a "fixed" position for its subject, this position seems to be absent in German. Let us now take a closer look at this "fixed" position for the subject in English in the tree structural representation below. This tree structural representation is generally divided into 3 important domains: the CP, TP and vP/VP domain. The content of the CP domain depends on the discourse situation (pragmatics) and expresses whether

a sentence is uttered to make an assertion or ask a question or whether something has already been addressed (a topic) or needs to be emphasized because it is at issue (a focus). The vP/VP domain is the lexical domain where the verb and its semantic arguments (the participants in the situation the verb describes) are generated. And the TP domain is the inflectional (tense and agreement) related domain.



[Figure 1]

Phrase structure tree of a typical English main clause construction

In English we have tense and verb agreement sitting in T together with 2 special features: the EPP and nominative case. The EPP feature, also called the Extended Projection Principle which says that every sentence must have a subject, is responsible for pulling out the verb's agent argument generated down low in the vP into the specifier of (Spec) TP position (Chomsky 1986). If we get a topicalization of the adverb, as demonstrated in sentence 3, then the adverb *tomorrow* will move into Spec CP, giving us the correct structure as seen in sentence 3 above. This EPP feature sitting in T makes sure that the subject always ends up in Spec TP, and thus, this Spec TP is the fixed subject position in English.

Aside from the EPP, nominative case is also associated with T because nominative case assignment is closely related to the finiteness (i.e. "tensedness") of a sentence. The following examples demonstrate that nominative case assignment does not happen in non-finite clauses:

9. a. He plans [to watch a movie]
   b. Er hat vor, [den Film zu sehen]
      he plans the movie to see.
      "He plans to watch the movie."

10) a. He is going [to study overseas]
    b. Er plant, [im Ausland zu studieren]
       he plans in overseas to study.
       "He plans to study overseas."

In sentence 9a, *a movie* is the object of the verb *to watch* and in sentence 9b, *overseas* is indicating place. We see no nominative-marked subject in these clauses. The German example

9b shows this even more clearly in the morphologically marked *den* that indicates the accusative case. From this, we can conclude that nominative case assignment goes hand in hand with the finiteness of a sentence. Thus, nominative case must be present with tense and verb agreement in T. This nominative case feature in T forms a Spec-Head relationship with the moved subject in Spec TP and this is how the subject gets its nominative case in English.

The structure of German main clauses is fundamentally different from the English one elaborated above. First and foremost, the verb moves into the C position in the CP domain (Vikner 1995). The easiest support for this can be seen by contrasting main clauses with subordinate clauses introduced by complementizers:

11.Er hat gestern im Restaurant gegessen.

He has yesterday in a restaurant eaten.

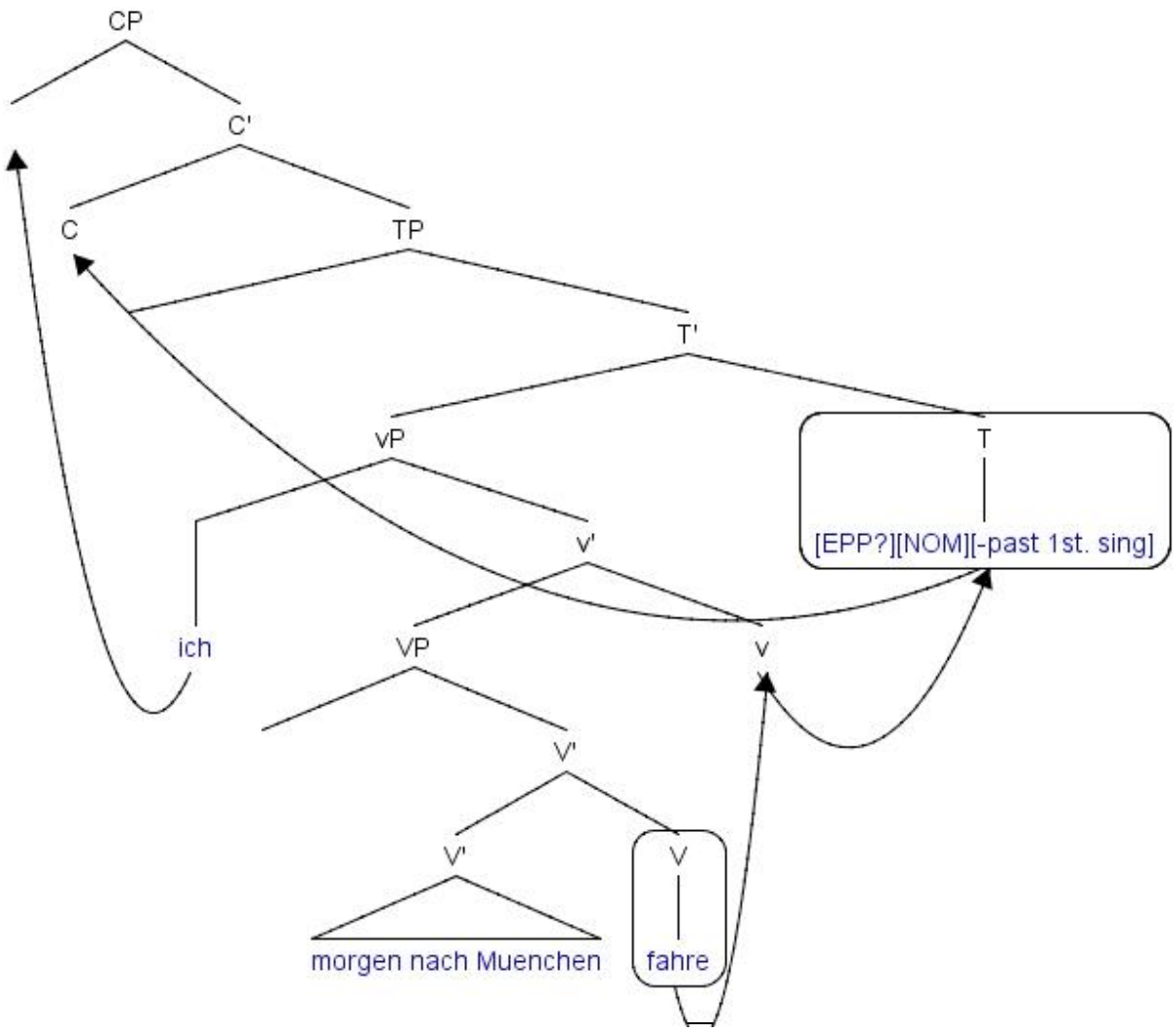
"He ate at a Restaurant yesterday."

12....., dass er gestern im Restaurant gegessen hat.

, that he yesterday in a restaurant eaten has

, "that he ate at a restaurant yesterday."

The fact that the finite verb does not move to the second position in subordinate clauses introduced by a complementizer such as *dass,* means that the verb is competing with the complementizer to occupy the position in C (Vikner 1995). Also in English, when it comes to interrogative clauses, we have either if/whether in C or a question feature [+Q] which triggers subject-auxiliary-inversion. As such, we get the following tree for sentence 2:



[Figure 2]

Phrase structure tree for a typical German main clause construction

Due to the underlying SOV structure, which is apparent in embedded clauses, where all verbal elements are at the end, the German TP and VP domains are right headed, while the English counterparts are left headed. Because the verb moves up to C in main clauses, we get something similar to a constant topicalization in German main clauses where another phrase from the vP has to move up to the Spec CP position to fulfill the V2 feature. In this case, we get the subject

moving up to Spec CP, but an adverb like *morgen* can also move up into Spec CP. The question is, when that happens, does the subject still move into Spec TP, like it does in English? Even in the case of the above tree structural representation of sentence 2, we have to ask whether or not the subject actually moves through Spec TP before getting into the Spec CP position. In other words, is Spec TP an obligatory subject position in German?

To answer this question, we must look at various sentence constructions in German:

13. Jetzt wird sich beeilt.

    Now will be hurried.

    "It will be hurried now."

14. Hier wird geschlafen.

    Here will be slept.

    "It will be slept here"

Sentences 13 and 14 do not have any subject, yet they are still grammatical. Passivization of such intransitive verbs would have been impossible in English because of the lack of a subject. Furthermore, the following subordinate clauses also prove that the subject can come after the dative objects:

15. weil schon zwei Mal in diesem Krankenhaus einem Arzt ein fataler Fehler unterlaufen ist.

    Since already two times in this hospital a doctor-DAT a fatal mistake-NOM happened is.

    " since already twice in this hospital, a doctor has made a fatal mistake."

16. weil noch nie einer Frau ein Orden verliehen wurde.

    Since yet never a woman-DAT a medal-NOM awarded was.

    " since a woman has never been awarded a medal."

[Wurmbrand 2006]

In both sentences 15 and 16, the fact that the subject comes after the dative object means that the subject must stay low within the vP. Thus, movement into Spec TP is not necessary.

When we look at constructions involving pure expletives, we can further establish that Spec TP is not filled in German. Expletives are basically words that contribute nothing to semantic meaning but are important for syntactic purposes. Let us now look at the following sentence.

17. It is important that you remember to bring your umbrella.

Here *it* has no meaning and is only serving as a dummy subject because English requires an overt subject to be present in Spec TP. Similarly, we have a meaningless *es* inserted in the following German sentences simply to fulfill the V2 requirement in German.

18. Es wurde getanzt.

    It was danced.

19. Es ist ihm nicht zu helfen.

    It is him-DAT not to help.

    "He can't be helped."

[Hoeing 1994]

Because these expletives do not carry any semantic meaning, they cannot be arguments of the verb and are thus not generated in the vP domain of the underlying (D)-structure. Instead, they are inserted straight into surface (S)-structure in either Spec TP for English or Spec CP for German to produce syntactically sound sentences. In German, however, these expletives never appear after the verb or complementizer. In fact, looking at the following sentences, it can be inferred that these expletives are strictly initial.

20. * Wurde es gestern getanzt?

    Was it yesterday danced?

    "Was it danced yesterday?"

21. * dass es gestern getanzt wurde.

    That it yesterday danced was.

    "that it was danced yesterday."

22. * Ist es ihm nicht zu helfen?

    Is it him-DAT not to help?

    "Can't he be helped?"

23. * dass es ihm nicht zu helfen ist.

    That it him-DAT not to help is.

    "That he cannot be helped."

[Hoeing 1994]

When we modify sentences 18 and 19, we get ungrammatical sentence constructions such as sentences 20-23. Because the verb moves to C, the expletive *es* in sentences 20-23 that comes after the verb is inserted into Spec TP. Thus, we see here that an attempt to insert *es* into Spec TP (as it's done in English) results in bad constructions. From this, we can see that the Spec TP position in German must really be empty.

We must, however, differentiate between the pure expletive *es* I have just described above and quasi-arguments or what I would call D-structure expletive *es.*

24. Gestern hat es geregnet.

    Yesterday has it rained.

    "It rained yesterday."

25. Hat es gestern geregnet?

Has it yesterday rained?

"Did it rain yesterday?"

At first glance, sentences 24 and 25 seem to be similar to sentences 20-23. However, if we try to analyze such weather expletive constructions more carefully, we are bound to realize that weather expletives are generated in the D-structure.

26. Es wird süβen Saft regnen.

It will sweet juice rain

"It will rain sweet juice."

[class notes: Lee-Schoenfeld]

In sentence 26, the noun *Saft* is marked with accusative case, and according to Burzio's generalization (1986) only verbs that have a subject (external argument) to assign a Theta-role to, have accusative case to assign to an object. This means that the expletive *es* must play the role of an external argument. If this *es* were purely expletive and were just inserted at the S-structure, then *Saft* could not get accusative case from the verb, due to the lack of an external argument. Thus, even though the weather expletive *es* still does not carry any obvious semantic meaning, it must be generated in the D-structure. This is why sentences 24 and 25 are grammatical. The expletive *es* is not inserted into TP, but rather generated in Spec vP. Therefore, expletives such as the weather expletive above should be classified into a different group from the pure S-structure expletives I mentioned earlier.

It must be noted, however, that German is not a pro-drop language. Thus, the subject is still obligatory if it carries semantic meaning. Only purely expletive subjects are optional and this stems from the fact that Spec TP is empty in German. Now that we have established this,

there are 3 major questions that I will address concerning Spec TP and the TP domain in the following chapters:

i) If Spec TP is unoccupied, then what happens to the EPP feature sitting in T in English? Is the EPP feature simply inactive in German? Or is the EPP-feature language specific?

ii) If the subject does not move into Spec TP, it cannot form a Head-Spec relationship with the nominative case assigning T. Then how does nominative case assignment work in German?

iii) And if the TP domain is empty anyway, is there a need for a TP domain in German?

I will argue for the existence of an EPP-like feature in C that motivates the German V2 structure in main clauses as suggested by Frey (2006), as well as for a government-like Agree relationship for nominative case assignment in German as claimed by Wurmbrand (2006). Lastly, I will also discuss the pros and cons of having a TP domain in German.

CHAPTER 2

VERB SECOND AND THE EPP FEATURE

The Germanic V2 main clause construction is one of the major puzzles in theoretical syntax. Many people have tried to explain this phenomenon, looking for the most economical, logical and elegant solution. While I have decided to adopt the classic head movement approach of the verb moving to C to account for V2 order as explained by Vikner (1995), this is by no means the only explanation for the German V2 structure. One account of V2 is remnant movement (RM) (Müller 2004) where both the subject and the finite verb arrive together in sentence-initial position embedded in a larger vP after a series of evacuations strips the vP off of other elements that are neither the XP in initial position nor the finite verb (Lechner 2009). This means that the initial XP and the finite verb are fronted together in one movement and the implication is that neither the traditional EPP feature in T, which ensures that the subject moves to Spec TP, nor the V2-trigerring EPP feature in C are needed, because subject and verb have not moved out of the vP domain. Lechner (2009), however, has demonstrated that this RM account of V2 constructions can be very problematic. According to him, since RM accounts treat all regular V2 constructions as VP fronting, they are subject to scope freezing, but this phenomenon is not attested in Germanic V2 constructions.

27 a. Einen spanischen Roman hat niemand gelesen.

A Spanish novel has nobody read.

“ Nobody has read a Spanish novel.”

b. Einen spanischen Roman gelesen hat niemand.

A Spanish novel read has nobody.

" A Spanish novel, nobody has read."

[Lechner 2009]

Sentence 27a can have two readings: that there exists one Spanish novel that nobody has read, and that nobody has read a Spanish novel. After undergoing vP/VP fronting, the second reading is lost as can be seen in sentence 27b. This is generally the scope freezing effect that comes with vP/VP fronting and the fact that sentence 27a does not demonstrate this effect means that German V2 constructions cannot be derived through (remnant) vP/VP fronting. Lechner (2009) also rejects Müller's (2004) account of an alternative RM account due to imperceptible evacuation movement steps, unattested scope orders and implausible base positions for the adverbs. Therefore, in line with his various arguments that I cannot elaborate on here, I will also disregard RM as the mechanism of deriving German V2 constructions in this thesis.

Zwart (2009), working within the Minimalist program approached the EPP feature in a different and unique way. He believes in the building of sentences from the bottom up, through a series of "Merge" processes. In his paper titled "Unchartered territory: Towards a non-cartographic account of Germanic Syntax," Zwart argues that derivations are not motivated by global considerations of syntactic architecture ("cartography"), but rather by local semantic relations between members of sister pairs. In his model described in detail in the paper, he favors a non-cartographic view where elements are merged to a workplace (that consists of one or more elements already merged earlier) as we go along in the process of building a complete sentence. In his framework, the position of elements is relative to the workspace, so definite positions like Spec TP are irrelevant. What seems like "movement," like the displacement of the subject to the

outside of the VP domain, is a resolution of an inner conflict. He believes that the EPP of Chomsky is a requirement of this type. However, it seems unnecessary to argue for a sharp division between the cartographic and non-cartographic approach in syntax. Since Zwart still uses a lot of the cartographic terms denoting certain domains like VP and TP, his non-cartographic approach is very similar to the weak cartographic approach where it is accepted that not all syntactic projections need to be represented for every sentence in every language. As a consequence of his "flexibility," however, Zwart claims, contra Vikner's movement of the verb to C, that even in German there is no need for movement into the CP domain. He claims that there appears to be no reason to believe that subject-initial main clauses in Continental West-Germanic are more than just TPs. While this claim within his framework seems plausible, his generalization that Continental West-Germanic languages have a subject-initial main clause can be problematic.

This is especially the case when it comes to his explanation of the EPP feature within his non-cartographic approach. Zwart explains that the lexical domain, vP/VP, lacks anchoring in time and hence is insufficient for reference to a state of affairs. Thus, the vP/VP has to be supplemented with tense features, yielding an event. This event is again incomplete without the expression of a subject. The EPP feature thus dictates that an event must be centered, and Zwart calls the subject the "center" of the event. Moreover, the derivation to which tense and subject have been merged is called a "centered event." This is convincing because the subject is after all the "external" argument of the verb, while the objects are "internal" arguments of the verb. This asymmetry between the subject and object is also convincingly described by Webelhuth (1990) in "Diagnostics for Structure." Being the external argument and thus the "doer" of the verb, it seems right that the event that is placed in time is centered on the subject. Assuming tense and

verb agreement features to be bundled together, the "merging" of the subject with the tense node resembles the Spec-Head relationship between T and Spec TP in our cartographic approach established in the previous chapter. This "Merge" also makes sense because the verb is conjugated according to the agreement features of the subject. However, if we come back to our earlier theory that German main clauses are V2 and not simply subject-initial, Zwart's explanation of the EPP feature seems to be flawed. If the movement of an element out of the VP is caused by the need to center an event on something, then German V2 means that an event does not have to be centered on the subject. This then raises the question of what this concept of "centering around an event" actually means. If an event centered around an object is interpreted as a topicalization in German, while an event centered on a subject is the neutral declarative sentence, then why isn't there such a difference in English? In English, whether or not a sentence is topicalized, the event seems to still be centered on the subject, thus giving us the strict SVO structure of English. Moreover while it is necessary for a subject to be merged with a tense (and agreement) node because they each depends on the other to convey certain features to the verb, the merging of the tense node with an object of a verb (in V2 constructions) is not motivated by the same force. In fact, the object influences neither tense nor verb agreement no matter where its position is in a sentence. This is where Zwart's simplified merging chains fail to account for the asymmetry between the subject and the object. This is also why the subject and the tense node belong in the TP domain in English, while German V2 constructions should involve the CP domain. In other words, continuous merging of various items in the numerations cannot account for the structural difference we see in English and German. In the end, Zwart's roundabout way of describing the EPP feature still fails to demystify the status of this feature and its relation to the subject.

Yet another trend in explaining the German V2 construction is the tendency to find motivation beyond the syntax domain, namely in phonology, as suggested by Chomsky (2001). Considering the consistent movement of the verb to C in the classic head movement (HM) approach adopted in this thesis, it seems that German main clauses involve topicalization by default. Féry (2007) suggests that this topicalization is associated with a special phonological structure. She defines topicalization as a syntactic and prosodic operation on constituents and claims that true discourse-driven, in particular contrastive topicalization has a prosodic origin. Cast in the framework of Optimality Theory (OT), Féry claims that the motor of topicalization is first the need to fulfill a constrain NoClash which prohibits adjacent pitch accents and second the need to realize a rising intonation on a constituent in order to express its topical character. In her framework, she recognizes the fact that the element filling in the first position in German does not necessarily have to be topical, and in the case when they are not topical, then it is just a matter of moving the first constituent of the sentence by virtue of being the "highest" constituent of the clause. This kind of movement, where an element of a sentence is either already in the leftmost position in the middle field or moved there before being moved (again) into the pre-field region, was a concept coined as Formal Movement by Frey (2006). Thus, while Féry (2006) is able to convincingly argue that topicalization is realized through the need to create a new prosodic domain to avoid two adjacent accents, she is unable to account for the neutral V2 construction with the subject or dative-argument (in the case of unaccusative verbs) in the initial position. Thus, it is clear that prosody and phonology alone cannot be responsible for the fronting of an element from the VP to a position before the verb in German main clauses.

To illustrate this point further, I would like to refer to Hinterhölzl and Petrova (2010) who established that V1 and V2 structures in declarative main clauses existed together in Old High German:

28. **Uuarun** thô hirta In thero lantskeffi.
    were there shepherds in that area
    "There were shepherds in that region."
29. [ih bin guot hirti = "I am good shephers"]
    Guot hirti **tuot** sina sela furi siniu scaph
    Good shepherd gives his soul for his sheep

[Petrova & Hinterhölzl 2010]

V1 clauses are generally accounted for by assuming that they establish a new discourse situation that is relevant for the development of the main story line. V2 clauses, on the other hand, included clauses expressing subordinating discourse relations that provide additional information on an already given discourse referent (as demonstrated in sentence 29). Thus, V1 clauses seemed to be closely related to focus constructions (new information) while V2 clauses seemed to be closely related to topic constructions (old information). Let us now take a closer look at the prosody of topic and focus constructions to establish that they are quite different from each other. Sentence 30 below demonstrates a focus (new information) construction, while sentence 31 demonstrates a topic (old information) construction.

30. **Eierlaufen** haben wir gemacht (nicht Sackhüpfchen)
    egg-and-spoon race have we made (not sack-race)
    "The egg-and-spoon race we did, not sack-race"

31. /**Eierlaufen** finde ich blöd\ (aber Sackhüpfchen wäre nicht schlecht).

Egg-and-spoon find I stupid (but sack-race would be not bad)

"The egg-and-spoon race I find stupid, but the sack-race wouldn't be bad."

[class notes: Lee-Schoenfeld Spring 2013]

Sentence (30) is a contrastive focus where we would put stress on *Eierlaufen* to get our intended meaning. In sentence (31), we are introducing an alternative to the discourse in a contrastive topic construction, and we need a "hat contour" intonation with a rise on *Eierlaufen* and a fall on *blöd* to establish our intended meaning. Here we see two different intonations with similar syntactic V2 construction, so different intonation does not necessarily have to be realized in syntactically different manners. The different prosodic realization of topic and focus constructions and its corresponding syntactic realization through V1 and V2 structures respectively in Old High German would have been a strong support for prosody driven syntactic constructions. However, while the prosody of the topic and focus constructions has not changed, modern German declarative main clause has developed in favor of the V2 construction. Thus, modern German V2 construction must be more grammatically motivated.

Moreover, to argue for prosody-driven movement, we have to infer that phonological factors actually take effect in the syntax. Within the Government-Binding theory (GB), however, rules for prosodic structuring should apply after the full syntactic structure has been built (including movements) (Korth 2010). There have to be information-structural/pragmatic markings (like "Topic" and "Focus") on constituents that tell the Phonology to realize these constituents with a certain intonation. These pragmatic pieces of information are clearly not part of the inner lexicon, so to be able to motivate movements, they have to be introduced in the course of the syntactic derivation. However, the mechanism of how this happens is still unclear

(Erteschik-Shir 2007). Since German V2 constructions can have focus/topic elements or the neutral subject/dative argument in the first position, I agree with Erteschick-Shir that Topic/Focus features must be integrated into the grammar. Thus, a constituent should get these features in the D-structure and when it does, then it becomes more prominent (compared to the neutral subject) and is thus attracted by the syntactic strong feature sitting in C. Therefore, these discourse markings do play a role in motivating movement, albeit an indirect one, because focus/topic movements are not always necessary. What is crucial is the interplay of these markings with other syntactic features in the derivation. In other words, the informational structure alone is not a sufficient trigger for movement.

Let us now come back to German main clause V2 structures that I have explained in the previous chapter. In this paper, I am adopting the approach that the German finite verb has to move to C in main clauses as explained by Vikner (1995). Vikner admits that this movement of the verb to the C position is hard to motivate. There must be some mysterious strong feature in C that forces C to be filled. But a more interesting fact is that this movement is then followed by the movement of another element from the vP/VP (or perhaps even higher in the case of an adjunct) into Spec CP. This two step movement of two different elements from within the derivation into the CP domain seems very elaborate since a V1 structure would have been much more economical in terms of movement. In fact, Old High German had a V1 structure and it is, of course, possible to have a V1 structure in modern German polar question constructions. We also get a lot of "topic drop" in modern German.

32. [Das] mach' ich.
    [that] do I
    "I'll do that."

33. [Da] kann man nichts machen.

    [there] can one nothing do.

    "One can't do anything about it."

34. [Die] kenn' ich nicht.

    [she] know I not.

    "I don't know her."

[class notes: Lee-Schoenfeld]

The movement of an element from the vP/VP into a position preceding the verb in the CP domain is very similar to the movement of the subject from the vP/VP into Spec TP in English, in that there does not seem to be any compelling reason for it. Of course, tense/finiteness and nominative case go together, but as we know even from English expletive constructions, NOM has to be assignable at a distance. In English, we say that there is an EPP feature present in T that necessarily pulls out the subject into the Spec TP position. The EPP - defined simply as the requirement for an overtly filled subject node (spec TP) - is a primary assumption in Government Binding theory. Since it is not a proven phenomenon, it could well be subject to language-specific parametric variation (Hoeing 1994). Thus, Hoeing suggests that the EPP is not a universal feature. Wurmbrand (2006), after demonstrating that the subject can stay low in the VP in German (refer to sentences 15 & 16) made a similar argument that the EPP in T is not present in German. In the same paper, however, Wurmbrand claims that the EPP is simply not active in German and Icelandic. While these two statements seem to convey the same meaning, they can have two slightly different interpretations. The absence of the EPP feature has typological consequences whereby languages can be categorized into those that have the EPP feature in T and those that don't, so in the framework of Universal Grammar (UG), T can be the principle

and the presence of the EPP in T is a parameter setting. The fact that the EPP is inactive, however, means that the EPP could still be present universally, but it is just inactive in German, so the EPP feature can be seen as a principle and its activeness is a parameter that needs to be set for individual languages. Regardless of the Principles & Parameters (P&P) setting that is assumed, it is a fact that if Spec TP is empty, then the EPP feature must function differently in German and English.

Thus, in line with Frey (2006), I propose that there must be an EPP-like feature sitting in C that is pulling out an element, not necessarily the subject, into the Spec CP position. This EPP-like feature requires the specifier of the phrase to be filled (via movement or merging of an expletive).This EPP-like feature also has to be considered separate from the strong feature in C that pulls out the verb from within the vP, because while the verb always moves into C in German main clauses, the nature of the element filling the first position in the sentence is not constant. In a neutral "out-of-the-blue" declarative sentence we get the subject or a dative argument in the first position.

35. Ich gehe morgen mit meinen Freunden ins Kino.
    I walk tomorrow with my friends in cinema.
    "I will go to the cinema with my friends tomorrow."

36. Ihm ist ein Fehler unterlaufen.
    Him-DAT is a mistake occured
    "A mistake happened to him."

With topicalization or focus constructions we get an element other than the subject or dative argument in the first position.

37. Da gehe ich morgen mit meinen Freunden hin.

    there walk I tomorrow with my friends to.

    "There, I will go with my friends tomorrow."

In fact these kinds of sentences sound more natural. Since almost everything we say is in response to something, we probably get more sentences starting with non-subjects than with subjects. With a wh-question, we get a wh-phrase in the first position.

38. Wohin gehst du morgen?

    Where to walk you tomorrow?

    "Where are you going tomorrow?"

And with yes/no questions, we get a V1 construction

39. Hast du gestern die Bücher wieder in die Bibliothek gebracht?

    Have you yesterday the books again in the library brought?

    "Did you bring the books back to the library yesterday?"

When there is a wh-question, there must be a feature [+WH] sitting in C that needs to be checked by moving a wh-phrase from within the vP into Spec CP. When there is a yes/no question, then it's often argued that there is a null operator sitting in Spec CP (a null WhP) that prevents any other phrase from moving there. And when the sentence is declarative, there must be a different kind of feature that motivates the movement of the subject or object from the vP into Spec CP. Since I am not adopting a Split CP domain (à la Rizzi 1997) and assume that there is only one Spec CP, there is no need to differentiate between the feature that is pulling out the subject or the object from within the vP into Spec CP. In German, in particular, it is rather superfluous to assign a split CP domain because of the general V2 requirement. Since there is no difference in

the syntactic presentation between focus and topic constructions in the S-structure, I do not see the need to assign different features for German declarative V2 sentences. Thus, I would like to call this general EPP-like feature in C [EPP_c]. If an object carries a focus or a topic marking, then it will get pulled up by this feature, otherwise, the phrase that is the highest constituent in the vP (the subject or a dative argument) will get pulled up into Spec CP (I recognize the difficulty of this implementation and realize that this can only serve as a temporary fix that needs to be further studied in the future). In the case where there is nothing to pull up (as in sentences 18 &19), then an expletive *es* has to be inserted during Spell-Out to satisfy this EPP_c feature. Therefore, there seem to be two kinds of strong features sitting in C in German:

a. A strong feature that pulls up the verb into C in the absence of a complementizer.
b. An EPP-like feature that pulls up a phrase from the Mittelfeld or causes the insertion of an expletive into Spec CP in the absence of a question feature.

Together these two strong features are responsible for the V2 construction in German declarative main clauses.

CHAPTER 3

NOMINATIVE CASE ASSIGNMENT

In English, we assume that there is asymmetrical case assignment between the nominative case and the accusative case. In this model adopted by Carney (2006) and first introduced by Chomsky (1981) with his case theory, the object of a sentence gets its accusative case assignment from the verb itself. Because direct objects are generated in the D-structure as a sister to the verb, case feature checking can be done through a c-commanding sister relationship. Thus, no movement is necessary.

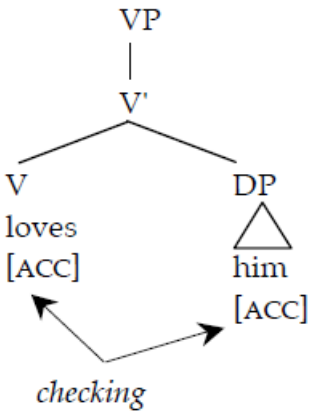


Figure 3 [Carney 2006]

Accusative case assignment

Nominative case assignment of the subjects, however, is very different. I have previously established in chapter one that nominative case assignment is closely related to the finiteness of a sentence. This is why the nominative case assigner [NOM] is said to sit in T. Moreover, as non-finite sentences also contain verbs, the fact that nominative case assignment does not happen in non-finite clauses means that the verb itself cannot assign the nominative case. The subject that is said to move into Spec TP due to T's EPP feature in English would then necessarily have to

form a Spec-Head relationship, where the head commands its specifier via so-called "m-command." Then, case feature checking can happen.

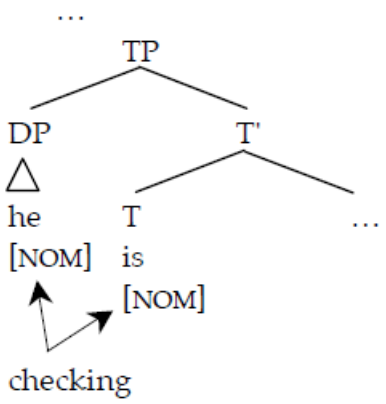


Figure 4 [Carney 2006]

Nominative case assignment

While accusative case assignment can still happen through a c-command relationship between the object and the verb in the VP in German, nominative case assignment would have to function differently as the subject does not move into Spec TP. As we have ruled out case assignment by the verb, there must be another mechanism that is responsible for assigning the correct nominative case. Of course, we can argue that the subject might move "covertly" to Spec TP, but we never hear it pronounced. However, if placement of an expletive subject is not even possible at Spec TP, as I have established earlier in chapter one, then the Spec TP spot must be somehow incompatible with the subject in German. We have to note here that the placement of an expletive in Spec TP is not optional, which would suggest that something *can* be placed in Spec TP, but rather impossible. Therefore, Spec TP must be totally empty. When we do get the subject preceding arguments that it follows in the unmarked order of the verb's arguments as in the unaccusative example in (36), then the subject must have scrambled into a position other than Spec TP.

40. , Dass so ein Fehler ihrem Mann unterlaufen konnte!

That such a mistake-NOM her husband-DAT happen can.

"That such a mistake could happen to her husband."

Safir (1985) suggests that there might be a silent [PRO] sitting in Spec TP that checks for nominative case and transfers this to the nominative argument in-situ through some form of coindexation. Wurmbrand (2006) argues that structural case is normally only assigned to arguments, and not empty subjects. Moreover, if this silent [PRO] in Spec TP can check for nominative case features, then it must also be visible for "binding." This would thus cause a violation of Condition C, which states that all R-expressions (such as the subject that is in-situ) have to be free. If the silent [PRO] in Spec TP is coindexed with and binds the subject, then the subject is not free. Since sentences containing in-situ subjects are grammatical, the silent [PRO] in Spec TP, if it exists at all, must then be visible for case checking but invisible for any other syntactic or semantic operations. Of course, it can be argued that the existence of another silent [PRO] that is puzzling for GB theory is widely accepted in control verb constructions.

41. Sally seems [t_i to have rejected the idea]

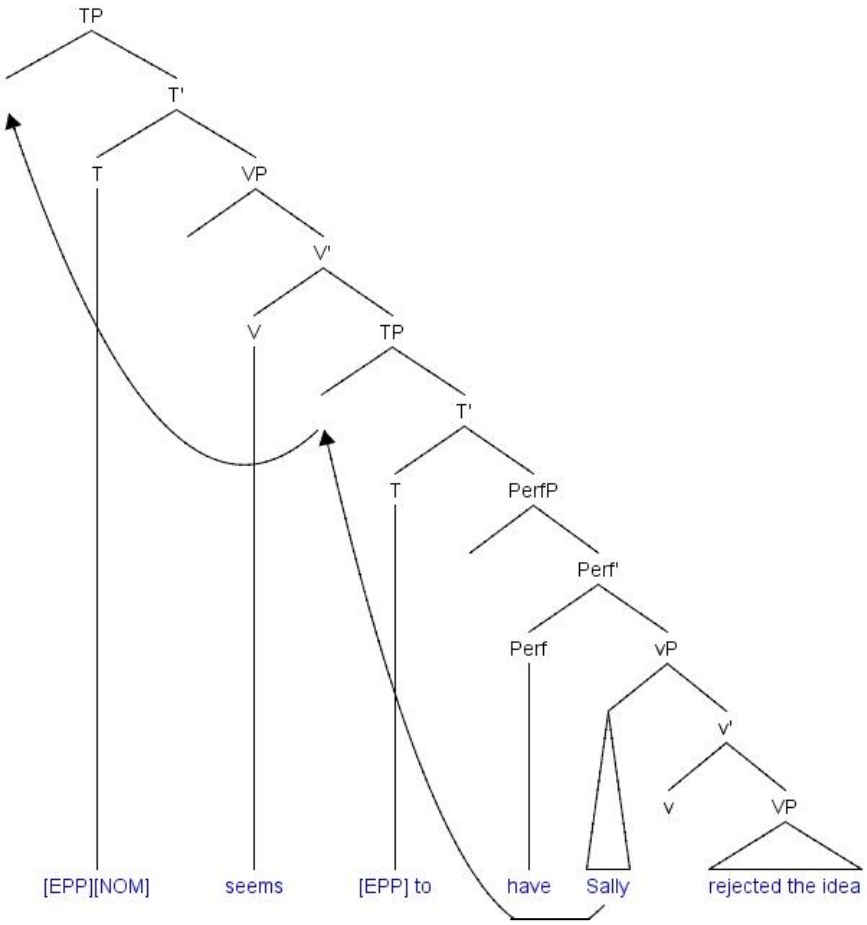
42. Sally$_i$ wanted [PRO$_i$ to reject the idea]

[Carney 2006]

Raising verbs like *seem* in sentence 41 have no external argument role to assign and take a non-finite complement clause (or a finite one introduced by *that*). Because raising verbs cannot assign any external argument role, frequently an expletive *it* has to be inserted in the subject position of the main clause to fulfill the EPP feature in English.

41'. It seemed that Sally had rejected the idea.

In sentence 41' above, the option of moving the subject of the complement clause is adopted for case assignment. Thus, *Sally* really is the subject of the lower complement clause, but because *Sally* cannot get nominative case assignment from the non-finite clause, it has to "raise" up into the Spec TP of the main clause that does not have any subject in order to get its nominative case.

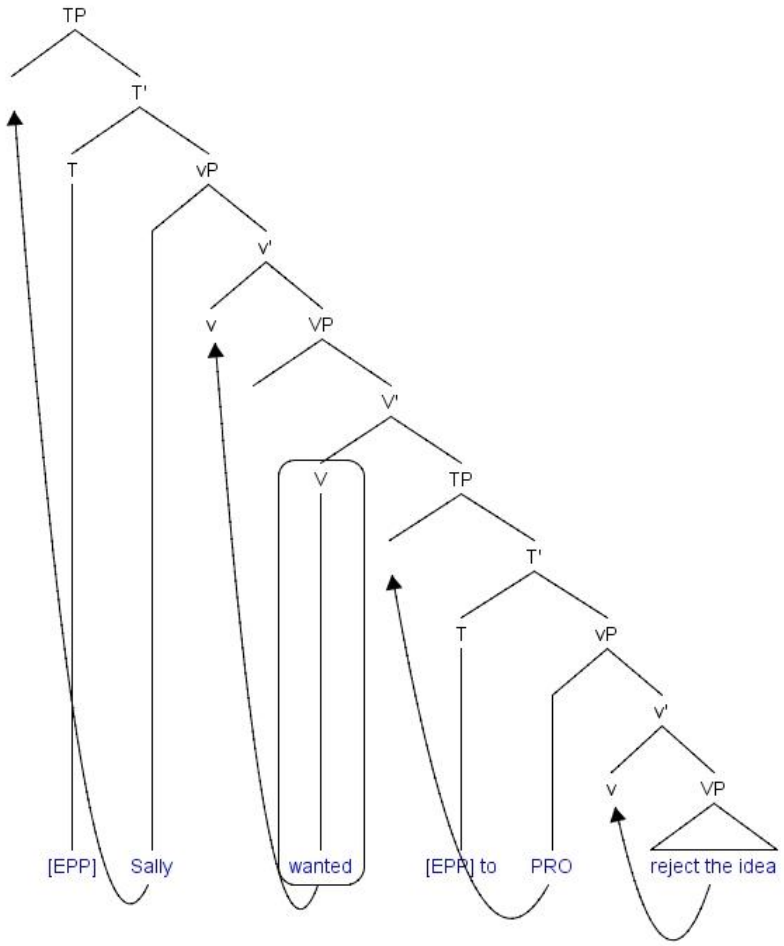


[Figure 5]

Raising construction

The situation is very different in sentence 42. Here, the verb *wanted* gives a thematic (semantic) role to the subject *Sally.* Thus, *Sally* originates and belongs to the main clause. On the other hand, it is also clear that *Sally* is the one that is leaving, so it must also be the subject of the lower complement clause. This "subject" of the lower complement clause is never pronounced, but it is

semantically essential to convey the right meaning. Thus, we say that there is a silent [PRO] that is coindexed with the subject of the main clause, *Sally*, and there is no raising/movement of the subject from the lower clause into the upper main clause.



[Figure 6]

Control construction

This is called “Control Theory” in syntax. If we regard this silent subject [PRO] as a free argument (R-expression) just like the subject of non-control sentences, then it can’t be coindexed with an entity that c-commands it, otherwise condition C of the GB theory would be violated. If we treat [PRO] as a pronominal, we predict that [PRO] should be able to get its reference without being bound (from a discourse referent outside the sentence). And even if we regard this silent

[PRO] as an anaphor that must be bound, we run into a problem because the binding domain that is established in English in the GB theory is the minimal clause containing the anaphor. Thus, the coindexation of the silent [PRO] across a clause boundary as seen in sentence 38 would violate condition A of the GB theory. The categorization of this silent [PRO] in nonfinite embedded clauses as an established syntactic entity is therefore also problematic.

On the surface, this acceptable silent [PRO] adopted widely in Control Theory might thus seem similar to the proposal of a silent [PRO] in Spec TP that only checks for the nominative case feature suggested by Safir. The silent [PRO] adopted in Control Theory does not seem to fit into the established syntactic GB theory either, but is needed semantically. And that is the crucial difference. The silent-[PRO]-in-Spec-TP hypothesis suggested by Safir makes no semantic contribution. In other words, there is absolutely no valid reason why this silent [PRO] has to be present in Spec TP. As such, I would like to support another alternative to nominative case assignment in German proposed by Chomsky (2000) and supported by Wurmbrand (2006).

This alternative suggests that there is a government-like Agree configuration between T, the nominative case assigner, and the subject in-situ. Under this approach, there is no need for movement, overtly or covertly, and there is no need for any "covert" material to be present in Spec TP. Instead, the functional head, T, where the nominative case feature [NOM] sits, "agrees" remotely with the subject in-situ. First and foremost, this approach presents us with the most economical explanation for nominative case assignment in German. Given that case assignment is done asymmetrically with subjects and objects in English anyway, there is no one fixed way of assigning case. In other words, case assignment is rather flexible. If it can be done through a c-command or an m-command relationship, there might also be other ways to do it. Other syntactic operations have been accepted as being possible, and they are similar to this "remote agreement."

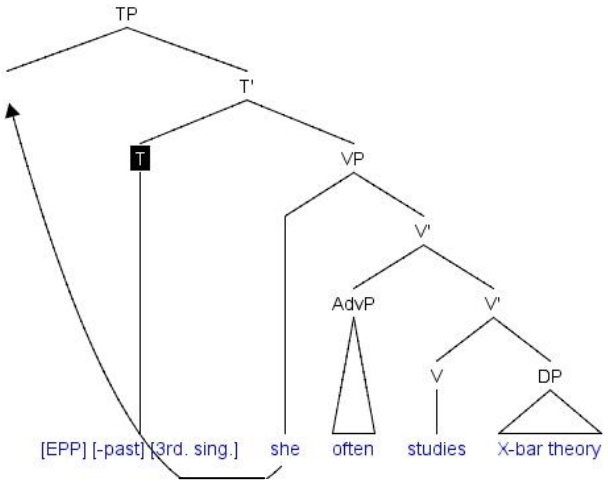
Subject-verb-agreement, for example, is also done long-distance. The tense and person/number agreement features sit together with the nominative case feature [NOM] in T but the verb does not necessarily move to T to get these features.

43. a. She often studies X-bar theory

b. * She studies often X-bar theory

[Class notes: Lee-Schoenfeld]

Sentence medial adverbs that modify the predicate mark the left edge of the whole verbal domain; so they are adjoined to the highest V'-node.



[Figure 7]

Phrase structure tree of sentence 43a (simplified without vP)

The tree above demonstrates the construction of sentence 43a. If we try to move the verb *study* into T to form sentence 43b, then we get an ungrammatical sentence. When we have yes/no questions, we also typically get a do-insertion because of the main verb's inability to move out of the VP domain in English.

44. Does she often study X-bar Theory?

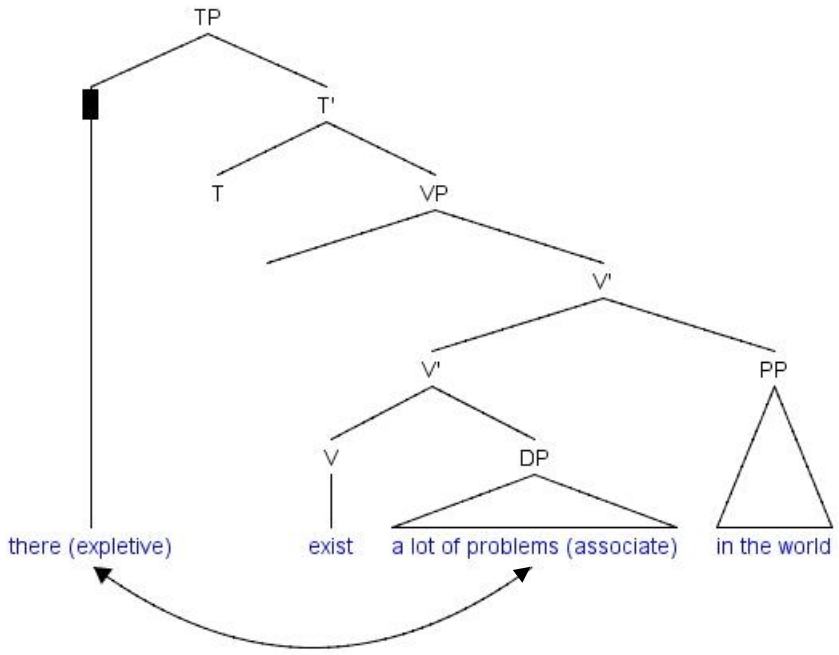
Thus, we can conclude that while tense and person/number agreement features sit in T, the main verb always remains in-situ in English, yet if there are no auxiliaries, it always agrees with the subject and has the correct tense. We say here that the subject transfers its tense and agreement features to T, and that T transfers these features down to the verb, and this is how the verb is able to get conjugated correctly for tense and agreement in-situ. If this operation is possible, then it is also possible for T to transfer its nominative case feature [NOM] down to the subject so that it can get the right case assignment in-situ.

The government-like Agree relationship supported by Wurmbrand (2006) operates in a similar manner. The only difference is that there is no need for feature transfers. The heads entering into the Agree relation simply engage in feature "checking." This government-like relationship has also been attested for other constructions like the existential "there" construction in English.

45. There exist a lot of problems in the world.

46. There exists poverty in the world.

We see from sentences 45 and 46 that the verb *exist* agrees in number with a noun phrase that is post-verbal. It is widely accepted that the existential *there* (expletive) and the post-verbal argument (associate) together build an Agree relationship that allows for the correct verb agreement as well as nominative case assignment.



[Figure 8]

Expletive *there* construction

The existential *there* and its "associate" in-situ together build an Agree relationship and "create" the right verb agreement and a way for the associate DP to get its nominative case from T. The existential *there* cannot therefore be present on its own in a sentence because lacking an associate, *there* is not able to transfer the right agreement features to the verb. This is very different from the expletive/quasi-argument *it.*

47. It rains a lot in Chicago.

It is able to stand on its own as a "quasi-subject" that correctly "influences" verb conjugation. Thus, we see that a government-like Agree relationship between an element in the TP domain and another element in the VP domain is not a unique operation, and this can be a very plausible explanation for nominative case assignment in German.

Of course, there is no way to prove the absence of covert movement or covert material in Spec TP for German nominative case assignment. However, in the presence of a much more

economical explanation for the phenomenon, I have to conclude that there is no need for either movement or covert material in Spec TP; and that nominative case assignment in German is done long-distance via an Agree relationship between T and the subject in-situ as suggested by Wurmbrand (2006).

CHAPTER 4

THE TP DOMAIN

Looking at our current model and conclusions in this thesis, we can also conclude that the TP domain in German is rather empty. Referring back to Figure 2 in the first chapter, it is clear that since the subject does not occupy the Spec TP position, that only tense and agreement features are sitting in T. Of course, it can be argued that the verb moves into T first on its way to C, but it is just an intermediary step. Since the verb can get its tense and agreement feature from a distance, as I have demonstrated in the previous chapter, there is no necessity for it to move into T to get its tense and agreement feature. The verb's movement to C through T is only to fulfill the locality constraint where a moving head cannot skip another head on its way up. Haider (2006) adopts a stance that German is in general TP-less. This hypothesis is plausible, given the relative emptiness of the German TP. If no "tangible" element is ever present in the TP-domain, then maybe there is no need for the TP domain. The [NOM], tense and verb agreement features could be sitting in C. If this is so, then it makes sense that an EPP-like feature would sit in C too. Because the TP domain is not available, there cannot be any movement into Spec TP, but since the CP domain is closely related to discourse/pragmatics, the EPP sitting in C cannot exclusively work only for subjects, but rather it also has to be able to account for the occurrence of topicalization and focus constructions. This is why the EPP feature in German works differently from the EPP feature in English. Moreover, the absence of the TP domain would definitely explain why the finite verb always has to move up to C, instead of just stopping in T like it does in English. If there is no TP domain in German, then there is no need for a mysterious "strong" feature in C that pulls up the verb. If it's C rather than T that has the tense/agreement features, then the verb is forced to move to C without this mysterious feature

because the parameter in German (as in French) for how the finite verb gets its inflection is set to movement (V-to-T). We know this because T-to-C [+Q] (question formation) results in finite verb-first constructions. So, for the verb to get to C, it must have also gotten to T.

Wurmbrand (2006), however, thinks that the TP domain is still needed for functional reasons. It is indeed nice to keep the distinction between the tense-related domain and discourse/ pragmatics-related domain. As I have also said earlier, the TP domain is very closely related to the subject. The features sitting in T like nominative case, tense and verb agreement features are all things that are related to the subject. Even though the subject in German does not move into Spec TP and is thus positionally not very special as compared to subjects in English, it is still different from objects. This has been nicely demonstrated by Webelhuth (1990) through some VP-fronting constructions:

48. [dem Groβvater geholfen] hat gestern niemand.

    The grandfather-DAT helped has yesterday nobody-NOM

49. *[niemand geholfen] hat gestern dem Groβvater.

    Nobody-NOM helped has yesterday the grandfather-DAT

The fronting of the external argument (nominative marked subject) together with its finite verb that results in the stranding of an internal argument (object) gives us an ungrammatical sentence as can be seen in sentence 49. The fronting of an internal argument together with its finite verb that results in the stranding of an external argument (sentence 48), however, gives us a grammatical sentence. Thus, it is clear that the internal argument or the object of a sentence is more tightly bound to the verb than the external argument or the subject, and that there is a distinction between the subject and the object in a sentence. This distinction between the subject

and the object can be established through the distinction of the TP domain and the vP/VP domain.

Wurmbrand (2004) also argues for a TP domain in German based on the following:

50. * [Wahrscheinlich ein Vertreter angerufen] hat gestern.

Probably a salesman-NOM called has yesterday.

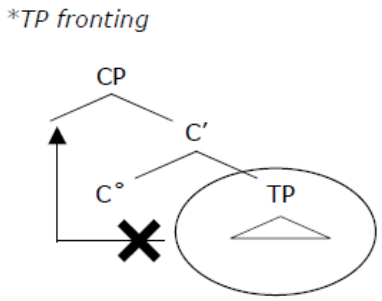
51. [Ein Vertreter angerufen] hat wahrscheinlich erst gestern.

A salesman-NOM called has probably just yesterday.

"It was probably just yesterday that a salesman called."

[Wurmbrand 2004]

Assuming that sentential adverbs are adjoined to TP, Wurmbrand argues that the ungrammaticality of sentence 50 is due to TP fronting, which was claimed by Abels (2003) to be ungrammatical as the TP is the complement of C, a phase head.



[Figure 9] [Lechner 2009]

Ungrammatical construction of TP-fronting

Thus, the ungrammaticality of sentence 50 due to TP fronting could be used as evidence for the presence of a TP domain in German. However, Wurmbrand's assumption that adverbials must be

adjoined at TP can be problematic since sentential adverbs can also be adjoined elsewhere further down in the tree.

At this point, therefore, there is not enough evidence to support either the TP-less hypothesis of Haider (2006), or the presence of TP à la Wurmbrand. It would be necessary to investigate other languages in this regard, especially those where tense and subject-verb agreement are not realized morphologically. If a TP-less hypothesis fits these languages, then Haider's TP-less hypothesis might become more plausible, but for now, I am more in favor of Wurmbrand's hypothesis for the sake of universality because the TP domain is widely accepted in many languages other than English, and adopting a TP-less hypothesis for German seems, at this point, to be too much of an exception.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

While a subject still retains its unique function within the sentence in German (as I have demonstrated in the previous chapter), the subject is not "positionally" special in that it does not have to occupy the Spec TP position. Thus, the German main clause construction is markedly different from its English counterpart, in terms of movement, as well as nominative case assignment. I have shown in this thesis that the German V2 construction is established via head movement of the verb into C, motivated by a strong feature in C. Then, another element needs to move out of the vP/VP into the Spec CP position motivated by an EPP-like feature sitting in C. Thus, nominative case assignment has to be established via an Agree relationship between T, the nominative case assigner, and the subject at a distance.

This comparison between German and English subject positions is important theoretically, but also from a pedagogical point of view. Due to the different internal positions of the subject in English and German, we can predict that English learners of German would have a lot of problems with sentence topicalization. Because post-verbal subjects are common in German, English learners often fail to identify German subjects as subjects. This results in wrong case assignment and common verb agreement mistakes. Moreover, English learners of German seem to be more rigid in their sentence structures, preferring to always start their sentences with the subject. Whenever a sentence is started with an adverb, like *tomorrow* or *then*, English learners of German tend to preserve the English SVO structure, resulting in ungrammatical verb-third constructions. Thus, while German and English main clauses can be superficially similar, it is important to point out the subtle differences early in the learning process before learners accustom themselves to applying the English SVO pattern in German.

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