

Assignment Four

This assignment concerns the syntax of clauses in German. The word order of main clauses in German is strikingly different from the word order of embedded clauses; what we mainly want to understand better is what the syntactic mechanisms are which lie behind those differences.

Part A

The examples in this section will give some clues about the order in main clauses, which you can comment on as you notice it. That is however not yet the focus; the main task in this part is to account for constituent order inside embedded clauses. The order in main clauses will be dealt with in parts D, E, and F.

Pay no attention to commas in the German examples. They are there because of standard German punctuation conventions, and have no grammatical significance.¹

- (1) Ich glaube, daß Fritz ein Buch über die Liebe gelesen hat .
I believe that a book about the love read has
'I believe that Fritz has read a book about love.'
- (2) Die Polizei hat mir gesagt, daß Fritz ein Auto klauen soll.
the police has me [DAT] said that a car steal [-FIN] should
'The police said to me that Fritz should steal a car.'
- (3) Wer hat behauptet, daß sie mit ihm gesprochen hat?
who has claimed that she with him spoken has
'Who claimed that she spoke to him?'
- (4) Ich glaube, daß die Kinder ein fremdes Mädchen nach Hause bringen.
I believe that the children a strange girl to house bring
I believe that the children are bringing a strange girl home'
- (5) Daß die Kinder ein fremdes Mädchen nach Hause bringen, stört
that the children a strange girl to house bring disturbs
mich.
me
'That the children are bringing a strange girl home disturbs me'

¹The orthographic symbol ß is phonemically /s/ and can be written *ss* if you don't want to mess with special symbols. Similarly *ü, ö, ä* and so on can be written *ue, oe, ae*.

- (6) Es stört mich, daß die Kinder ein fremdes Mädchen nach Hause
it disturbs me that the children a strange girl to house
bringen.
bring
'It disturbs me that the children are bringing a strange girl home'

How would you propose to account for the observed order of elements in the embedded clause?

Part B

What do the examples below (in (7)–(17)) show you?

- (7) Es ist traurig, daß alle Menschen sterben müssen.
'It is sad that all men must die'
- (8) Daß die Kinder nach Berlin fahren sollen, stört mich.
'That the children should go to Berlin disturbs me'
- (9) Ich weiß, daß er in Berlin gewohnt hat.
'I know that he has lived in Berlin'
- (10) Wir glauben, daß er angekommen ist.
'We believe that he has arrived'
- (11) Daß die Kinder nach Berlin gefahren sind, ist klar.
'That the children have gone to Berlin is clear'
- (12) Er weiß, daß wir das Haus gesehen haben müssen
'He knows that we must have seen the house'
- (13) Ich glaube, daß der Professor das Buch gelesen haben kann.
'I believe that the professor can have read the book'
- (14) Es ist unwahrscheinlich, daß er angekommen sein kann.
'It is improbable that he can have arrived'
- (15) Daß die Kinder ein fremdes Mädchen nach Hause bringen wollen, ist unglaublich.
'That the children want to bring a strange girl home is unbelievable.'
- (16) Es ist klar, daß er einen Affen nach Hause gebracht hat.
'It is clear that he has brought a monkey home'
- (17) Wir glauben, daß die Kinder über den Fluss schwimmen können.
'We believe that the children can swim across the river.'

Part C

Now revise your analysis further to account for the following. Comment in full on everything relevant.

- (18) Ich glaube, daß Hans nicht studiert.
I believe that NEG studies
'I believe Hans is not studying'
- (19) Ich denke, daß du nicht stehlen sollst.
I think that you NEG steal [-FIN] should
'I think you should not steal'
- (20) Ich glaube, daß die Kinder nicht nach Berlin gefahren sind.
I believe that the children NEG to gone are
'I believe the children did not go to Berlin'
- (21) Ich glaube, daß der Professor nicht Fußball gespielt hat.
I believe that the professor NEG soccer played has
'I believe the professor has not played soccer'
- (22) Ich denke, daß die Kinder nicht einen Affen nach Hause bringen sollen.
I think that the children NEG a monkey to house bring [-FIN] should
'I think the children should not bring a monkey home'

Part D

Here are some embedded yes/no questions:

- (23) Ich weiß nicht, ob er in Berlin wohnt.
'I don't know whether he lives in Berlin.'
- (24) Sie fragte mich, ob die Kinder nach Berlin fahren.
'She asked me if the children were going to Berlin.'
- (25) Wissen sie nicht, ob sie einen Sohn haben?
'Don't they know whether they have a son?'
- (26) Ich weiß nicht, ob du den Wagen brauchst.
'I don't know if you need the car.'
- (27) Die Frage ist, ob alle Menschen sterben müssen.
'The question is whether all men must die.'

- (28) Die Frage ist, ob er nicht angekommen ist.
'The question is whether he didn't arrive.'
- (29) Der Professor erinnert sich nicht, ob er das Buch gelesen hat.
the professor remembers self NEG if he the book read has
'The professor doesn't remember whether he has read the book'
- (30) Die Kinder fragten, ob sie einen Affen nach Hause bringen könnten.
'The children asked if they could bring a monkey home.'

Here are some root yes/no questions:

- (31) Wohnt er in Berlin?
'Does he live in Berlin?'
- (32) Fahren die Kinder nach Berlin?
'Are the children going to Berlin?'
- (33) Haben sie nicht einen Sohn?
'Don't they have a son?'
- (34) Brauchst du den Wagen?
'Do you need the car?'
- (35) Müssen alle Menschen sterben?
'Must all men die?'
- (36) Ist er nicht angekommen?
'Didn't he arrive?'
- (37) Hat der Professor das Buch gelesen?
'Has the professor read the book?'
- (38) Können die Kinder nicht einen Affen nach Hause bringen?
'Can't the children bring a monkey home?'

What would you propose for the derivation of yes/no questions?

It is probably not a surprise to you that the following are all impossible:

- (39) a. *Ob wohnt er in Berlin?
if lives he in
'Does he live in Berlin?'
- b. *Ob er wohnt in Berlin?
- c. *Ob er in Berlin wohnt?

We move on now to root declarative clauses ...

Part E

Word order patterns in root (non-embedded) clauses are very different. This can be seen in the examples of (40)–(45):

- (40) a. *Fritz ein Buch über die Liebe gelesen hat.
 b. *Ich ein Auto kaufen soll.
 c. *Die Kinder nicht nach Berlin gefahren sind.
 d. *Sie mit ihm gesprochen hat.
- (41) a. Ich habe in München dieses Auto geklaut.
 I have in Munich this car stolen
 'I stole this car in Munich.'
 b. Dieses Auto habe ich in München geklaut.
 this car have I in Munich stolen
ibid.
 c. In München habe ich dieses Auto geklaut.
 in Munich have I this car stolen
ibid.
- (42) a. Die Kinder bringen einen Affen nach Hause.
 the children bring a monkey to house
 'the children are bringing a monkey home.'
 b. Nach Hause bringen die Kinder einen Affen
 to house bring the children a monkey
 'The children are bringing a monkey home'
 c. Einen Affen bringen die Kinder nach Hause
 a monkey bring the children to home
 'The children are bringing a monkey home'
- (43) a. *Ich dieses Auto habe in München geklaut.
 b. *Ich in München dieses Auto habe geklaut.
 c. *Ich in München habe dieses Auto geklaut.
 d. *In München dieses Auto habe ich geklaut.
- (44) a. Am abend geht man zum Weihnachtsmarkt.
 in-the evening goes one to-the Christmas-market
 'In the evening people go to the Christmas market.'
 b. Man geht am Abend zum Weihnachtsmarkt.
 c. Zum Weihnachtsmarkt geht man am Abend.
- (45) a. *Man am Abend geht zum Weihnachtsmarkt.
 b. *Man am Abend zum Weihnachtsmarkt geht.

The possibility illustrated in (46) is especially interesting:

- (46) a. Mit ihm gesprochen hat sie nie wieder.
 with him spoken has she never again
 'She never spoke to him again.'
 b. Eine Zeitung gekauft hat er.
 a newspaper bought has he
 'He has bought a newspaper.'

In constructing your analysis, bear in mind the following questions and guidelines:

- In a root clause, where is the finite verb always?
- Propose an analysis that accounts for the constant position of the finite Verb in root clauses. Motivate and discuss it carefully.
- Consider with special care what your analysis should say about (5).
- If there are any movements in your analysis, what motivates them?

The following two subsections should give you some important clues concerning the construction of your analysis.

'Root' Patterns in Certain Complement Clauses

The word order patterns seen in the previous section are for the most part restricted to root clauses. However, there is a small group of verbs (sometimes known as "bridge verbs") which allow the root pattern in their complements. Three such verbs are *glauben* ('believe'), *wissen* ('know') and *sagen* ('say'). These verbs allow both patterns in their complements, as seen in (47) and (48):

- (47) a. Ich weiß daß die Kinder das Brot gegessen haben.
 I know that the children the bread eaten have
 'I know that the children have eaten the bread.'
 b. Ich weiß die Kinder haben das Brot gegessen.
 c. Ich weiß das Brot haben die Kinder gegessen.
- (48) a. Sie glauben daß die Kinder den Film gesehen haben.
 they believe that the children the movie seen have
 'They think that the children have seen the movie.'
 b. Sie glauben die Kinder haben den Film gesehen.
 c. Sie glauben den Film haben die Kinder gesehen.

But all of the variations in (49) are completely impossible:

- (49) a. *Ich weiß daß die Kinder haben das Brot gegessen.
 b. *Ich weiß daß das Brot haben die Kinder gegessen.
 c. *Sie glaubte daß die Kinder haben den Film gesehen.
 d. *Sie glaubte daß den Film haben die Kinder gesehen.

Questions

Constituent questions in German should look reasonably familiar to you.

- (50) a. Was machen sie?
 what make they
 'What are they making?'
 b. Womit schreibt sie jetzt?
 with-what writes she now
 'What is she writing with now?'
 c. Warum muss ich sterben?
 why must I die
 'Why must I die?'
 d. Welche sollen wir töten?
 which should we kill
 'Which (of them) should we kill?'
- (51) a. *Warum ich muss sterben?
 b. *Warum sterben muss ich?
 c. *Womit jetzt schreibt sie?
 d. *Was sie machen?

Complement questions take the following form:

- (52) a. Ich frage mich was wir tun sollen.
 I ask myself what we do [-FIN] should
 'I wonder what we should do.'
 b. *Ich frage mich was sollen wir tun.
 I ask myself what should we do [-FIN]
 'I wonder what we should do.'

Part F

Finally, consider the implications of the following facts. German has a large class of verbs which are at least superficially similar to *understand* or *withstand* in English, in that they seem to consist of a prepositional prefix in combination with a verbal stem. The verbs *anrufen* (*an-*+*rufen* 'call on the phone') or *ausziehen* (*aus*+*ziehen* 'pull out') are typical examples. Consider the following data:

- (53) a. Jetzt zieht er den Nagel aus.
 now STEM he the nail PREF
 'Now he is pulling out the nail.'
 b. Mein Vater ruft mich von Zeit zu Zeit an.
 my father STEM me from time to time PREF
 'My father calls me on the phone every so often.'
- (54) a. *Jetzt auszieht er den Nagel.
 b. *Mein Vater anruft mich von Zeit zu Zeit.
- (55) a. Jetzt hat er den Nagel ausgezogen.
 now has he the nail pulled-out
 'Now he has pulled out the nail.'
 b. Mein Vater hat mich gestern Abend angerufen.
 my father has me yesterday evening called-up
 'My father called me on the phone yesterday evening.'
- (56) a. Jetzt kann sie den Nagel ausziehen.
 now can she the nail pull-out [-FIN]
 'Now she can pull out the nail.'
 b. Am Abend kann er mich anrufen.
 in-the evening can he me call-up [-FIN]
 'He can call me in the evening.'
- (57) a. weil Marga Johann selten anruft
 because seldom calls-up
 'because Marga seldom calls Johann on the phone'
 b. Ich denke daß sie den Nagel auszieht.
 I think that she the nail pulls-out
 'I think that she is pulling out the nail.'

Does the proposal you developed in the previous section leave you in a position to understand these apparently strange patterns?