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### ***German Partial VP Fronting in a Meaning-Text Approach***

This communication has the triple objective of showing that

- the elements in front of the German finite verb always form a unique constituent (with the exception of sentence connectors and parenthetical phrases)
- constraints of creating groups that show up together in the *vorfeld* are easily expressed on the semantic level
- this apparently implies a direct link between semantics and word order but it can be described and formalized in the linear model of the Meaning-Text Theory (MTT)

The assumption that German is a V2 language has important consequences on the whole descriptive framework of this language. It implies that generally all elements in front of the finite verb form a constituent.

For example, most proofs on the existence of VPs are based on the fronting possibilities, as the exclusion of the fronting of the subject in the fronted constituent seems to imply a special status of subjects ((1), (2)). It is however problematic that many constituents clearly identifiable as subjects (agreement) can be fronted with a nonfinite verb ((3) - (5)). The data seems to be captured much more easily on the semantic level:

*An agent and a predicate cannot form a group (even if it is not the subject as in (3b)), whereas other complements can be grouped with the predicate.*

A parallel argument can be applied to the problematic double fronting in (6) - (9). These constructions are particularly common with idioms ((6), (7)) or light verb constructions ((8),(9)) where at least one of the fronted elements is semantically part of the predicate. Again, it seems that the grouping in the *Vorfeld* is not triggered by a specific syntactic constellation but by a grouping that is already present on the semantic level, where "hart ins Gericht gehen mit" 'to roast somebody' or "Geld verdienen" 'earn money' form one semantic node. (In MTT, lexical functions allow to construct light verbs when passing from semantics to syntax.) In a topological analysis, we can say that *the embedded domain in the Vorfeld can be created by any element that corresponds (at least partially) to a predicative node on the semantic level*, even if it is realized by a nominal or prepositional element in syntax. Such an analysis is similar to Hoberg 1997's empty head approach as the right bracket of the embedded domain remains empty, but we consider the conditions allowing this construction to be completely predetermined in semantics.

The rules proposed have been formalized in the MTT two step approach: semantic graph - syntactic tree - topological constituent tree. For the latter correspondence we use an extension of the lexicalized TAG formalism: Tree Unification Grammars, proposed by Gerdes 2001. The fact that valency is not checked in the topology - syntax interface results in a very effective (polynomial) analysis where a high number of structural ambiguities are only resolved in the syntax-semantics interface: The possible groupings of words are passed on to the semantics level where the well-formedness is tested (with rules like the ones given above).

We showed that a two step (semantic-syntax) analysis of fronting data of German is easier than an analysis based solely on syntax. The analysis makes use of communicative groupings and the classical semantic-syntax analysis of MTT (treatment of light verbs and idioms). The approach is completely formalized and work in progress includes an

implementation in a first experimental setting and further analyses of data where the predicative part of the double fronting is less clear.

- (1) [Den Roman (obj) gelesen] hat dieser Student.
- (2) \*[Dieser Student (subj) gelesen] hat den Roman.  
*This student has read the novel.*
- (3a) [Ein Fehler (subj.) unterlaufen] ist dieser Frau noch nie.
- (3b) \*[Dieser Frau (dat.) unterlaufen] ist ein Fehler (subj.) noch nie.  
*No error ever slipped in with this woman.*
- (4) [Ein Fußgänger (subj.) überfahren] wurde gestern auf der B45.  
*Yesterday, a pedestrian was run over on highway 45.*
- (5) [Ein Linguist (subj.) angekommen] ist bisher nicht.  
*No linguist has arrived yet.*  
from Haider 1985
- (6) [[Hart] [ins Gericht]]? ging ... Karamanlis mit seiner Vorgängerregierung... *Karamanlis roasted the preceding government.*  
from [www.waz.de/waz/waz.extra7.startseite.81278.php](http://www.waz.de/waz/waz.extra7.startseite.81278.php)
- (7) [[öl] [ins Feuer]]? gossen Enthüllungen von NTW-Journalisten, daß... *Revelation of NTW journalists added fuel to the flames.*  
from [www.wostok.de/news/4-00/inhaltframe.html](http://www.wostok.de/news/4-00/inhaltframe.html)
- (8) [[Richtig] [Geld]]? wird aber nur im Briefgeschäft verdient. *Real money can probably only be earned in the mail business.* from Müller 2003
- (9) [[Zum zweiten Mal] [die Weltmeisterschaft]]? errang Clark 1965 *For the second time, the world cup was won by Clark in 1965.* from Beneš 1971

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