NOTES ON FUNCTIONAL CATEGORIES IN GERMAN

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Functional categories are generally considered to be present in every language. For example, the functional categories C and T are assumed to be present in those languages which have complementizers and finite forms of verbs. In this paper it is shown that German has only one functional category F with properties of C and T in pre-VP position. In the course of the history of German, this position was introduced for finite verbs that were moved to pre-VP position. The position is available not only as a landing site for finite verbs, but also a slot for complementizers. Its hybrid nature has persisted into modern German.*

Keywords: German, auxiliary, functional category, historical change

1. Introduction

The following examples show that finite verbs in German can occupy the second and the last positions of a clause.¹

(1) a. Ich spiele jeden Tag Tennis. (V2)
I play every day tennis
‘I play tennis every day.’

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¹ The finite Verb in the first position is observed in yes-no question as shown in (i):

(i) Spielt er jeden Tag Tennis?
Plays he every day tennis
‘Does he play tennis every day?’
b. Ich glaube, dass er heute kommt. (V-last)
   I think that he today is-coming
   ‘I think that he is coming today.’

In the traditional analysis, V2 and V-last constructions are derived in the following manner: V moves to T and gets tense and agreement (V-last), and the tensed V moves to C (V2), as shown in (2). If there is a complementizer in C, such as dass in (1b), C blocks the movement of the tensed V to C, which results in a V-last construction.

(2)

The analysis shown in (2) is presented by Fanselow (1987), Grewendorf (1988) and Stechow and Sternfeld (1988), but the arguments for the analysis seem not to have been made adequately. Steenefeld (1991), for example, says that “Zur Vereinfachung unserer Darstellung werden wir die Besetzung dieser Position … weitgehend ignorieren (‘In order to simplify our description, we will not take into consideration the movement of V to T.’).” Haider (1993) claims that German does not have a functional category T. Objections to Haider’s proposal are raised, for example, by Vikner (1995), who postulates a category T in German and argues that the differences found in the positions of the finite verb and the possible distribution of expletive subjects among the “West Germanic” languages (Afrikaans, Dutch, Frisian, German, Swiss German and West Flemish) can be explained partly by the position of the T in the clause.² Vikner’s theory depends

² In Vikner, functional category T corresponds to I⁰. Languages are considered to differ with respect to the following three fundamental parameters.
mainly on the assumption that T is postulated in every language.\(^3\)

In the following section, we will show that there is no empirical evidence for the existence of a functional category T in German, although there is evidence for the presence of T in English.

2. T as a Syntactic Category

2.1. The Presence of T in English

There is considerable evidence for a functional category T in English. Many syntactic phenomena are ascribed to the presence of T in the clause structure such as Subject-AUX-Inversion, Tag Question, AUX Contraction, VP Deletion, etc., as shown in (3) to (6):

(3) Subject-AUX-Inversion
   a. Do you read the newspaper?
   b. *Read you the newspaper?

(4) Tag Question
   a. It’s good, isn’t it?
   b. You like spicy food, don’t you?

(5) AUX Contraction
   a. I’m not a student.
   b. I can’t read the letters.

(6) VP Deletion
   a. John couldn’t have been studying Spanish, but Bill could.
   b. *John couldn’t have been studying Spanish, but Bill.

(Akmajian, Steele and Wasow (1979: 15))

Akmajian, Steele and Wasow (1979) pointed out that we can explain these facts straightforwardly by postulating a syntactic node AUX. In the present framework, the presence of an AUX node can be regarded as evidence for the existence of a syntactic category T in English.

(i)  a. ±V2
     b. ±V⁰-to I⁰-movement
     c. I⁰-VP or VP-I⁰

\(^3\) An anonymous EL reviewer suggested to me that Vikner (1995) and Haeberli (2002) should be referred to in our discussion. Vikner and Haeberli take different positions from this paper about the clausal structure of German and consider the distribution of expletive es and pro based on the comparative studies on Germanic languages. I will not refer to Haeberli because he takes for granted the presence of numerous functional categories such as Agr, Neg and Asp, and T.
2.2. German in Comparison to English

Unlike in English, there is no syntactic evidence that the functional category T is present in German. None of the syntactic forms which correspond to the syntactic phenomena in (3) to (6) are observed in German:

(7) Lesen Sie die Zeitung?
   Read you the newspaper?
   ‘Do you read the newspaper?’
(8) Es ist gut, nicht wahr?
   It is good, not true?
   ‘It is good, isn’t it?’
(9) Er muss mehr lesen als ich *(es) muss.
   He must more read than I (it) must.
   ‘He must read more books than I.’

As (7) shows, there is no Subject-Aux-Inversion in German. To form a yes-no question, the finite verb must be fronted to C. There is also no Tag Question in German. The only way to express the meaning of Tag Question is to add nicht wahr to the end of the clause, as shown in (8). VP Deletion is not possible in German as shown in (9).

In English, modals constitute AUX elements and they do not have nonfinite forms. But, as the examples in (10) show, modals in German have nonfinite forms, and thus behave like lexical verbs:

(10) a. Er muss unterscheiden können.
    He must distinguish can
    ‘He must be able to distinguish.’
   b. Wir brauchen ein Passwort, um den Text lesen zu können.
    We need a password in order to the text read to can
    ‘We need a password in order to be able to read the text.’

These data show that the modals in German do not show the phenomena which are ascribable to the presence of T.

2.3. No Movement of V to T in German

As we have seen in section 2.2, there is no evidence of a syntactic category T in German. If a finite form of a verb were formed by V-to-T Movement, the position of T would have to immediately follow V as in (11). In the subordinate clause, the finite verb is V-last as in (12). Under the V-to-T Movement analysis, the verb trinke would move to T and remain there in (12) in the subordinate clause, because it cannot move from T to C.
Let us consider an example involving a verb with a CP complement:

(13) Weil ich geglaubt habe, dass er heute kommt, …
    because I thought have that he today is-coming, …
    ‘because I thought that he is coming today, …’

In (13), CP complement occupies the clause-final position. As (14) shows, the sentence which contains a center-embedded CP structure is marginally acceptable in German:

(14) ??? Weil ich dass er heute kommt geglaubt habe, …
    because I that he today is-coming thought have, …
    ‘because I thought that he is coming today’

Thus, the CP in (13) is considered to be extraposed as shown in (15):

In (15) CP1 moves over T and is adjoined to TP. This configuration shows
that the verb *geglaubt* and CP₁ do not form a constituent.

However, this is not always the case, because there are cases where V and CP₁ are considered to form a constituent:

(16) Behauptet, dass Maria heute kommt, hat er.
    claimed that Mary today is-coming has he
    ‘He claimed that Mary is coming today.’

The example (16) is derived by VP Topicalization. In (16) the VP *behauptet, dass Maria heute kommt* is moved to CP-Spec, which means that V and a CP complement form a constituent.

Note that in the subordinated clause the VP-sequence *behauptet, dass Maria heute kommt* is ill-formed as shown in (17).⁴

(17) *Ich glaube, dass er [V behauptet] [CP dass Maria heute kommt] hat.
    I think that he claimed that Mary today is-coming has
    ‘I think that he claimed that Mary is coming today.’

(17) is ill-formed because in the sequence *behauptet … hat* a CP complement behaves as an intervener and does not allow the verbal complex formation. The verbal complex formation, known as verb raising, was first pointed out by Evers (1975) in the generative framework. This rule requires that verbs in VP projections should be all merged and form a verbal cluster as in (18b):

(18) a. VP₂(b)  
    VP₁  
    CP V hat  
    behauptet  
    V verb raising

Let us return to (16) which involves VP Topicalization. (19) shows the derivation of (16):

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⁴ An anonymous EL reviewer pointed out that I must explain why (17) is ungrammatical if the VP *behauptet, dass Maria heute kommt* forms a constituent. I greatly appreciate the comment.
As Vikner (1995) observes, the adjunction of CP to the higher VP node is allowed. See example (20) and the verbal complex formation as shown in (21):

(20) Behauptet haben, dass Maria heute kommt, wird er claimed have that Mary today is coming, will he
‘Have claimed that Mary is coming today, he may.’

(21) In (21), CP is adjoined to VP₂ and the VP₂ is directly moved to CP-Spec.

Note also that in the subordinated clause the VP-sequence behauptet haben, dass Maria heute kommt is ill-formed:

(22) *Ich glaube, dass er behauptet haben [CP dass Maria heute kommt] wird.

The sentence is not well-formed because the adjacency condition on the verbal complex formation is violated and a verbal cluster behauptet haben wird is not formed. Thus, sentences like (16) and (20) derived by VP Topicalization are explained by the VP projection analysis without the postulation of a syntactic category T.

There is another piece of evidence to show that V-to-T Movement is unnecessary in German. Let us consider verbs with separable prefixes. In
the case of separable verbs only verb stems must move to C in German:

(23) a. Ich weiß, dass der Gast heute ankommt.
    I know that the guest today arrives
    ‘I know that the guest arrives today.’
  b. Der Gast kommt heute an.
    The guest comes today at
    ‘The guest arrives today.’

In the subordinate clause, the finite verb *ankommt* which is in the V-last position cannot move to C and does not separate itself from the prefix *an* as in (23a). On the other hand, in the main clause the finite verbal form part *kommt* of the separable verb is moved to C, as shown in (23b), resulting in a separable verb construction. If we assume the movement of V to T to C, then the finite part *kommt* must be in T and then move to C in (23b).

Let us see the following example:

(24) Du meldest uns an.
    You pre-register us
    ‘You pre-register us.’

The verb *anmelden* is also a separable verb. Related to the verb *anmelden* there is a verb with two separable prefixes. See the following examples from Haider (2005).

(25) a. Wenn du uns voranmeldest,
    If you us pre-register
    ‘If you pre-register us.’
  b. *Du meldest uns voran.
      you register us pre
  c. *Du anmeldest uns vor
      you register us pre
  d. *Du voranmeldest uns.
      you pre-register us

The verb *voranmelden* has two separable prefixes *vor* and *an*. This verb can occur only in the subordinate clause as in (25a). There is no way to derive a separable verb construction with a finite form verb in the second position as shown form (25b) to (25d). These examples show that the finite verb *voranmeldest* stays within VP and that there cannot be a movement of V to T.\(^5\) This means that we need not postulate a syntactic category T, and

\(^5\) See Fortmann (2007) for the structure of verbs such as *voranmelden* that do not move at all. In this paper, I assume that inflected forms of verbs are formed in the lexicon and the finite forms are checked at the position of F in covert syntax.
the finite verb can move directly to C without going through a functional category T in German.

2.4. A Possible Historical Change

It is well known that Proto-Germanic language and Old High German during the period from the 8th century to the 11th century were basically verb-final. However, V1 and V2 constructions were also observed. See the following examples from Old High German cited in Lenerz (1985):

(26) a. uuarun thô hirta in thero lantskeffi uuahhante …
   were there herdsmen in the country watching …
   ‘there were herdsmen in the country on watch.’ (Tatian 6,1)

   b. Bruthlauft ist gawisso garo.
      wedding is certainly ready
   ‘Certainly, all preparations have been made for the wedding.’
      (The Monsee Fragments 15,18)

   c. Táz óuga ál sihet unde al bechennet.
      the eye all sees and all recognizes
   ‘The eye sees everything and recognizes everything.’
      (Notker des Deutschen 342,17)

(26) show V-first (26a), V-second (26b) and V-last (26c) examples. Lockwood (1969) also shows that Old High German had three types of order: V-first, V-second and V-last. The first position or second position of the clause had been available for unstressed element including verbs, as Wackernagel (1892) suggests. The pre-VP position was also available for concessive mood or conditional mood, and was regarded as a position for a sentence operator, i.e. C. The finite verb is positioned in the first position when the position has a narrative function, as Önnferfors (1997) suggests.

Lenerz (1985) proposes that the position CONFL (COMP + INFL) was introduced in German to capture the fact that the complementizers or the finite verbs occur in the first and second positions of the clause. From a pragmatic and syntactic point of view, Brandt, Reis, Rosengren and

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6 Sentences like (i) used to be quite common in the earliest records of Germanic languages, and SOV is assumed to have been the unmarked order in Proto-Germanic.

(i) Ek Hlewagastir holtingar horna tawido
   I Hlewagastir from holtingar horn made
   ‘I, Hlewagastir made this horn.’
   (runic inscription: ‘Horn from Gallehus’; Behaghel (1932: 13))
Zimmermann (1992) propose the following hybrid structure:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Spec} \\
\text{C'/T'} \\
\text{C/T} \\
\text{VP}
\end{array}
\]

The proposal by Brandt et al. (1992) corresponds to the CONFL analysis by Lenerz in that the ‘fused’ functional projection CP/TP in (27) shows hybrid nature and it can explain why the complementizers and the finite verbs do not co-occur in the second position simultaneously. We will call CP/TP or CONFL the category $F$ as shown in (28):

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Spec} \\
\text{F'} \\
\text{F} \\
\text{VP}
\end{array}
\]

In the course of history German has obtained the category $F$ which serves as a landing site for finite verbs in pre-VP position. However, the category $F$ was not split into two projections—CP and TP—as in English.

3. TP-Spec in German

In section 2, I have shown that there is only one functional category $F$ in German and claimed that it is not necessary to postulate a syntactic category $T$ in German. If there is no $T$ in German, then there is no TP projection, and thus no TP-Spec.

Let us consider how TP-Spec functions. It is generally considered that in English TP-Spec is a position to which NP moves for nominative Case. In the passive sentence, the object NP must be moved to TP-Spec for nominative Case as shown in (29):

\[
[\text{The book}] \text{ was read [ ] by John.}
\]

In German too, nominative Case is assigned to the subject of the passive sentence as in (30).

\[
\text{Weil das Buch gelesen wurde, …} \\
\text{because the-Nom book-Nom read was, …} \\
\text{‘Because the book was read, …’}
\]

The question is whether the nominative NP das Buch is moved to TP-Spec and assigned the Case. In this section we will show that the nominative
Consider the following examples involving an idiom chunk *den Garaus machen* ‘do in’:

(31) a. Er hat Karl den Garaus gemacht.
    he has Karl-Dat the-Acc Garaus-Acc made
    ‘He did in Karl.’

b. Es wurde Karl der Garaus gemacht.
    It-Nom was Karl-Dat the-Nom Garaus-Nom made
    ‘Someone did in Karl.’

In the passive (31b) NP *der Garaus* is assigned nominative Case, but stays in situ. The fronting of the Nominative NP results in the sentence being almost unacceptable as in (32):

(32) ??Weil [der Garaus] Karl \[\_\]\_ gemacht wurde, …
    because the-Nom Garaus-Nom Karl-Dat made was
    ‘Someone did in Karl.’

The contrast between (31b) and (32) shows that nominative Case is assigned within VP and there is no need for the postulation of TP-Spec.

The following discussion concerning the sentences with an unmarked word order provides another piece of evidence. We can answer the question sentence (33a) in two ways: (33b) and (33c).

(33) a. Was hast du dem Schüler geschenkt?
    What-Acc have you the-Dat pupil-Dat given
    ‘What did you give to the pupil?’

b. *Ich habe das Buch dem Schüler geschenkt.
    I have the-Acc book-Acc the-Dat pupil-Dat given
    ‘I gave the book to the pupil.’

c. Ich habe dem Schüler das Buch geschenkt.
    I have the-Dat Schüler-Dat the-Acc book-Acc given
    ‘I gave the pupil the book.’

In both answers the focus is on *das Buch*. The focused element is positioned near the verbal cluster in the sentence with unmarked order. The answer (33c) is acceptable because *das Buch* is placed adjacent to the verbal cluster *geschenkt habe* in the sentence with unmarked order (in which

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7 The discussion is based on Lenerz (1977), and the analysis is extended by Höhle (1982).
dative NP precedes accusative NP).\(^8\) (33b) is unacceptable because *das Buch* which is scrambled out of the VP with unmarked order, is not placed adjacent to the verbal cluster.

Let us now consider the corresponding passive sentences:

(34) a. Was ist dem Kind geschenkt worden?
   ‘What was given to the child?’
   
   b. Ich glaube, dass dem Kind das Fahrrad
      I think that the-Dat child-Dat the-Nom bike-Nom
      geschenkt worden ist.
      given been has
      ‘I think that the bike was given to the child.’

   c. *Ich glaube, dass das Fahrrad dem Kind
      I think that the-Nom bike-Nom the-Dat child-Dat
      geschenkt worden ist.
      given been has
      ‘I think that the child was given the bike.’

(34b) is acceptable as an answer to the question sentence in (34a). The nominative NP *das Fahrrad* can be interpreted as a focused element because it is adjacent to the verbal cluster. The sentence (34c) is, however, unacceptable because *das Fahrrad* is scrambled out of VP and is not adjacent to the verbal cluster. It is clear from (34b) and (34c) that the nominative NP in the passive sentence with unmarked order stays in situ at the object position in the active sentence. Thus, we can say that the passivization in German does not involve a movement to TP-Spec.

4. A Functional Category in Child German

Lastly let us consider how the functional category \( F \) is acquired in Child German. German children around the age of two who have acquired the finite verb forms produce utterances with V2-order. This suggests that children acquire the functional category \( F \) as a slot for finite verbs. See the following Table, which I made based on the data from Clahsen, Eisenbeiss and Penke (1996: 144):

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\(^8\) The focused element is positioned after the unfocused element. In (33c), the tensed verb *habe* is moved out of the verbal cluster to \( F \). See Höhle (1982) for the focus projection.
Table (35) shows that the positions of finite verbs are different between in Stage I and in Stage II. Children in Stage I utter the finite verbs with no inflection as in the example *mone auch lump ausziehen* ‘[Si]mon[e] also rag take-off,’ while we can observe inflected forms in Stage II, as in the examples *habe Maxe auch* ‘have Max too,’ or, *ich hab hier reintecken tasche* ‘I have here put-in bag.’ We can say from Table (35) that in Stage I the functional category F has not emerged and German children have no preference with respect to the placement of V in the utterance, but with the acquisition of inflected forms of finite verbs they gradually produce V2 constructions and acquire the functional projection of category F.

There are, however, different views concerning the clausal structure of early child German. Déprez and Pierce (1993) and Poeppel and Wexler (1993) argue for the availability of functional categories in early child German. They argue against the view that T is present in early child grammars. If V-to-T movement is acquired early in German, it should be shown by the presence of finite forms of verbs placed in the sentence final position and by negative markers appearing in the preverbal position. If V-to-C movement is acquired early, then the German child grammar should manifest the verb-second phenomenon and postverbal negation should occur at an early stage. The data in Déprez and Pierce (1993: 49) show that preverbal negation occurs at early stage with subjectless sentences, which indicates V-to-T movement in German. They observe, however, that “many verbs in
the early verb-final constructions occur with infinitival morphology.” Thus, their arguments are not convincing for the projection of TP in child grammar of German.

5. Summary

We have shown that we do not have to postulate a syntactic category T in German, and that a functional category F with properties to characterize both categories C and T in English was introduced in the period of Old High German. The projection of functional category F functions to host such elements as WH, topic words and finite verbs and to determine the three types of finite verb position in German. We have provided the acquisition data of child German and have claimed that the hybrid nature of this projection has persisted into adult German.

It remains an open question how the finite forms of verbs are explained in German. It is well established in the literature that there is a tight connection between the complementizers and the inflectional system. For the present I hold that the category F hosts features such as tense, number and person agreement. Further comparative study between English and German will provide us with an insightful view of the nature and the emergence of a functional category.

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