
An integrative constraint-based account of constituent linearisation in the German midfield.

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We propose a uniform model of constituent linearisation in German. Based on the results of two series of experiments, we argue that both arguments and adjuncts are base-generated in orders that are subject to violable linear precedence rules.

Argument order with experiencer-object verbs We consider two two-alternative forced-choice (2AFC) studies on argument order with experiencer-object verbs, one with animate, the other with inanimate subjects (see Masloch et al., 2023). We argue that the decisive factor determining the preferred order of subject and object is causativity. For a sub-class of experiencer-object verbs – namely those whose stimulus is not a causer – we found no preferred order at all. This is hard to explain on all approaches postulating a base order (e.g. Haider & Rosengren, 2003). Additionally, verbs show a varying behaviour across experiments, the main difference between them being the subject’s animacy. We explain the absence of a preference for a specific order with some experiencer-object verbs with animate subjects as the result of a constraint equilibrium.

Linearisation of event-internal modifiers Two 2AFC studies focussed on the relative order of objects and event-internal adverbial PPs (Kiss et al., 2023). As the results of a first study show that subject-oriented instrumentals as well as object-oriented comitatives prefer a position below the object, we assume a constraint on anaphoricity to be prevalent here. In the second study, we contrasted affirmative and privative readings of instrumentals and subject-oriented comitatives. Affirmative comitatives slightly prefer a position above, while the adverbials in all other conditions prefer a position below the object. We argue that affirmative comitatives take over the theta role of their antecedent (agent), assuming constraints based on agentivity and animacy to be at stake here. Our results contradict approaches assuming free base generation of adverbials (e.g. Haider, 2000) and those assuming base positions for adverbials (e.g. Frey & Pittner, 1998).

References: • Frey, W. & K. Pittner (1998). Zur Positionierung der Adverbiale im deutschen Mittelfeld. *Linguistische Berichte* 176, 489–534. • Haider, H. (2000). Adverb placement – convergence of structure and licensing. *Theoretical Linguistics* 26, 95–134. • Haider, H. & I. Rosengren (2003). Scrambling: Nontriggered chain formation in OV languages. *Journal of Germanic Linguistics* 15(3), 203–267. • Kiss, T., Pieper, J & A. K. Börner (2023). Word order constraints of event-internal modifiers. <https://ling.auf.net/lingbuzz/006319> • Masloch, S., Poppek, J. M. & T. Kiss (2023). Not so peculiar after all: On the normal position of arguments of German experiencer-object verbs. <https://ling.auf.net/lingbuzz/007118>