

Predicate doubling and VP-topicalisation in German

Roland Hinterhölzl
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

1 Introduction

It is well-known that German allows for the topicalisation of bare verbs, as is illustrated in (1a). In GB-theory and in the principles and parameters framework, data like (1a) *prima facie* were problematic, since it was assumed that only XPs can move into XP-positions. Thus, in Den Besten and Webelhuth's (1987) original account of V-preposing in German and Dutch, they argue that what has been moved into [Spec,CP] in (1a) is not simply a verb, but must constitute an entire VP. Consequently, they propose to analyze (1a) parallel to cases of VP-preposing (cf. (1b)) in which the direct object has been scrambled out prior to VP-to-CP movement, as is illustrated in (1c).

- (1) a. gelesen hat Hans das Buch
 read-PART has Hans the book
 'Hans has read the book'
- b. [_{VP} das Buch gelesen] hat Hans t_{VP}
- c. [_{VP} t_{SCR} gelesen] hat Hans [das Buch]_{SCR}

In the minimalist program, specifically adopting the framework of bare phrase structure (cf. Chomsky 1995), movement of a head into a non-head position becomes conceivable: the verb counts as head in its base position, where it projects, but counts as maximal projection in [Spec,CP], where it does not project. Thus, there is a possible alternative to the derivation of (1a) in terms of (1c) that does not depend on evacuating the VP, given that V-preposing in (1a) only involves movement of the verbal head, as is illustrated in (2).

- (2) [_{CP} V ... [_{VP} ... V object]]

Tue Trinh (in this volume) argues in favor of the analysis in (2) for cases of V-preposing and proposes a prosodic condition on the spell-out of the movement chain in (2) which has it that the verb in its base position can only be deleted, if it forms the edge of a phonological phrase boundary. His empirical generalization is founded on facts of V-proposing in Dutch, German, Hebrew, Norwegian, Swedish and Vietnamese. It is argued that Hebrew and Vietnamese do not allow for deletion of the lower copy of verb movement for the following reason: Based on the mapping

condition between syntactic structure and phonological structure given in (3) (cf. Chen 1985, Selkirk 1986), the verb in head final languages like German and Dutch does form the edge of a phonological phrase, while the verb in head initial languages like Hebrew and Vietnamese does not occupy the right edge of a phonological phrase.

(3) Align (XP,R)

Align the right edge of every XP with the right edge of a phonological phrase

There are a number of empirical issues that need to be clarified before this proposal can be fully evaluated to which I will turn now.

1.1 About phonological phrases in VO-languages

First let me point out that the predictions that the mapping condition in (3) makes for the phrasing of verb and direct object in head initial languages are not generally accepted in the literature. While the prediction that Tue Trinh's account makes for V-preposing in Italian is correct, as is illustrated in (4), note that already Nespor & Vogel (1986) point out that verb and direct object in Italian only optionally form a phonological phrase, as is illustrated in (5ab). Nespor and Vogel consequently propose an initial prosodic mapping in which every lexical element forms its own phonological phrase and assume an additional phonological operation, called restructuring, which obligatorily applies to light objects, that is non-branching objects, optionally applies to branching but not heavy objects as seen in (5)), but crucially cannot apply to heavy objects, as is illustrated in (6).

- (4) letto Gianni ha *(letto) il libro
read John has read the book

- (5) a. (Gianni) (ha letto) (il libro)
b. (Gianni) (ha letto il libro)
John has read the book

- (6) a. (Gianni) (ha letto libri)
John has read books
b. (Gianni) (ha letto) (il mio libro nuovo)
John has read the my book new

A similar claim about the prosodic phrasing of verb and direct object is made by Wagner (2005) concerning the head initial language English. He proposes two modes of prosodic composition which are directional. Subordination applies to a verb and its preceding direct object, creating a joint prosodic phrase, as is standardly assumed for the sequence of OV in German and other head final languages, while sister matching applies to a verb and the direct object following it, creating two different prosodic constituents that may optionally restructure with each other. The prediction that Trinh is making is thus that heavy objects should allow for the deletion of the preposed verb in VO-languages. This prediction needs to be checked. At least for Italian, the prediction is not met, as is illustrated in (7) and of course it remains to be seen whether cases like (7) involve movement or base-generation.

(7) letto Gianni ha *(letto) il mio libro nuovo

Trinh's account also predicts that preposing of intransitive verbs should allow for the deletion of the lower copy in VO-languages like Hebrew and Vietnamese, since in this case the verb would occupy the right edge of a phonological phrase. I have not been able to verify this prediction, but I would be surprised if it turns out that languages differ in major spell-out options in this way.

1.2 Verb Preposing in other Germanic (OV-) languages

V-preposing in Yiddish and Afrikaans present an interesting testing ground for Trinh's hypothesis. While the head nature of the Yiddish VP is very much under debate (cf. Diesing 1997 for its VO-status and Vikner (2001) for its OV-status), Trinh's proposal makes the prediction that V-preposing in Yiddish should be able to delete the lower copy, when the VP is emptied; as is the case when the direct object in Yiddish is realized by a (weak) pronoun, since weak pronouns obligatorily move into the middle field, as weak pronouns do in German and Dutch. As the data in (8), taken from Cable (2003), shows, this prediction is not borne out.

(8) Visn vilt er es visn
know wants he it know

While the head nature of the VP is disputed for Yiddish, it is generally assumed that the VP in Afrikaans is head final. Yet, V-preposing and predicate-preposing in general obligatorily involve spell out of the lower copy, as the data from Biberauer (2009) indicate.

- (9) a. sing sal hy sing
sing shall he sing
b. dom is sy nou eenmaal dom
stupid is she now once stupid

Of course, it has to be clarified whether predicate topicalisation in Yiddish and Afrikaans involve movement or are base-generated in place. Instead, I will focus on the author's treatment of V-preposing in German, to which we will turn in the following section.

2 VP-topicalisation in German

The author presents arguments, mainly drawn from Fanselow (2002) and Hinterhölzl (2002), showing that the classical account of verb-preposing in terms of evacuation of the VP by scrambling and subsequent remnant VP-movement into Spec,CP, as proposed by den Besten and Webelhuth (1989), is untenable. The two most important arguments are listed in (10) and illustrated in (11) and (12) below.

- (10) a. constituents that cannot undergo scrambling can be stranded by VP-topicalization
b. constituents that are stranded by VP-topicalization and thus must be taken to have moved out of their base position do not display any freezing effects.

In (11), it is shown that predicates generally resist scrambling but can be left behind by vP-topicalisation. The contrast between (12a) and (12b) shows that subextraction of *da* from a scrambled position of the containing PP leads to ungrammaticality, while no such violation appears in the case of VP-topicalisation. This fact is unexpected if scrambling were the only operation that can evacuate the containing PP from the VP.

- (11) a. ??weil er grün den Zaun t gestrichen hat
Since he green the fence painted has
b. Gestrichen hat er den Zaun grün
painted has he the fence green
(12) a. Da hat keiner [t mit] gerechnet
There has nobody upon reckoned

- b. *Da hat [t mit] keiner gerechnet (vs. Es hat damit keiner gerechnet)
there has upon nobody reckoned
- c. gerechnet hat da keiner [t mit]
reckoned has there nobody upon

In Hinterhölzl (2006), it is argued on the basis of the data in (11-12) that movement out of the VP is not to be mixed up with scrambling but constitutes licensing movement. While scrambling is a semantically motivated movement operation which affects only arguments (and adjuncts) with the relevant scope and discourse properties, licensing movement affects all VP-internal arguments and predicates independently of their semantic and pragmatic properties.

The distinction between licensing movement and scrambling can be demonstrated by the different effects of movement of direct objects around manner adverbs (licensing movement) and sentential adverbs (scrambling), as is illustrated in (13) and (14). Licensing movement in front of manner adverbs is obligatory and does not give rise to a semantic effect, while scrambling in front of a sentential adverb is always correlated with a specificity effect that is argued in Hinterhölzl (2006) to be source of the freezing effect noted above.

- (13) a. weil Hans ein Buch genau las (existential reading possible)
- b. *weil Hans genau ein Buch las
- c. weil Hans was sorgfältig las
- d. *weil Hans sorgfältig was las
- (14) a. weil Hans ein Buch oft las (only specific interpretation)
- b. weil Hans oft ein Buch las

Therefore Trinh's argument that German must allow for V-preposing in terms of head movement does not go through since there is an alternative account in terms of licensing movement and VP-topicalisation. In the following section, I will strengthen this argument by showing that the head movement falls short of explaining the full set VP-topicalisation data in German.

3 The topicalisation of multiple heads

Note that in Trinh's account of the spell-out of V-preposing, it must be assumed that participle and auxiliary do not form a verbal cluster, that is to say do not form a head-adjunction structure,

otherwise one would expect that the topicalized participles in (15) (taken from Trinh's paper) cannot be deleted in their base position for the simple reason that the edge of the VP would then be occupied by the auxiliary *haben*. Instead, it must be assumed that the non-finite verbs each form the right edge in their respective VP, as is illustrated in (16).

- (15) a. geküsst wüsste ich gern wer wen t hat
Kissed would-like-to-know I who whom has
b. gerechnet dürfte er da ja wohl kaum mit t haben
reckoned might he there yes well barely with have
- (16) a. [[wen geküsst_{VP}] haben_{VP}]
b. [[damit gerechnet_{VP}] haben_{VP}]

The analysis in (16) then implies that the topicalisation of two non-finite verbs must involve XP-movement. Note that even in this case non-scrambable elements can be stranded (without any freezing effects), supporting the above analysis in terms of licensing movement, as is illustrated in (17). The sentences in (17) are a bit marked since they require a very specific context for their discourse appropriateness, but are definitely grammatical.

- (17) a. lesen wollen hat er erst gestern was
read want has he only yesterday something
b. rechnen wollen wird da keiner mit
reckon want will there noone with

To summarize, the complex VP-topicalisation data in German cannot be explained by assuming head movement into [Spec,CP], but call for an elaborate account of verb cluster formation in German, as is argued for in Hinterhölzl (2006). The factors that determine the spell-out of movement copies of VP-topicalisation in light of the data given in section 1, in my opinion, still await a more empirically grounded account.

References

- Biberauer, Theresa (2009). Predicate-doubling in Afrikaans: facts and comparison. Ms., University of Cambridge/Stellenbosch University.
Cable, S. (2003). The remarkable Yiddish Pseudo-Infinitive: Evidence for Phases? Ms., MIT.
Chen, M. (1985). The syntax of phonology: Xiamen tone sandhi. Ms., University of California, San Diego.

- Chomsky, Noam (1995). Bare Phrase Structure. In *Government and Binding Theory and the Minimalist Program*, ed. G. Webelhuth. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Den Besten, H. and G. Webelhuth (1987) "Remnant Topicalization and the Constituent Structure of the VP in the Germanic SOV Languages (abstract)." *GLOW Newsletter* 18, 15-16.
- Diesing, Molly (1997). Yiddish VP order and the Typology of Object Movement in Germanic. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 15,369-427.
- Fanselow, Gisbert (2002). Against remnant VP-movement. In: Artemis Alexiadou et al. (eds.): *Dimensions of Movement: From Features to Remnants*. John Benjamins, Amsterdam & Philadelphia, 91-127.
- Hinterhölzl, Roland (2006). *Scrambling, Remnant Movement and Restructuring in West Germanic*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Hinterhölzl, Roland (2002). Remnant Movement and Partial Deletion. In: Artemis Alexiadou et al. (eds.): *Dimensions of Movement: From Features to Remnants*. John Benjamins, Amsterdam & Philadelphia, 127-150.
- Nespor, Marina and Irene Vogel (1986). *Prosodic Phonology*. Dordrecht: Foris Publications.
- Selkirk, Elisabeth (1986). On derived domains in sentence phonology. *Phonology Yearbook* 3: 371-405.
- Vikner, Sten (2001). Verb movement Variation in Germanic and Optimality Theory. Habilitation Thesis, University of Tübingen.
- Wagner, Michael (2005). Asymmetries in prosodic domain formation. In *Perspectives on Phases*, eds. N. Richards and M. McGinnis, MITWPL 49, 329-367. Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press.