

Workshop on Minor Sentence Types – Introduction

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Overview

What is a sentence?

History of sentence definitions

- Ancient Greek definitions

- Definitions in early German grammars

- Challenges for traditional definitions

- Two approaches

 - Form-centered approaches

 - 'Functional' approaches

Completeness

- Completeness and context

- Completeness and predications at speech act level

- Completeness, context and directive speech acts

What are major and minor sentence?

- ▶ What is a sentence in a first place?
- ▶ Not a trivial task
- ▶ Different approaches (cf. Seidel 1935, pp. 70–75, 82–86)
 1. Formal approaches inspired by Ancient Greek Philosophy and Grammar (centered on judgements/assertions)
 2. Functional/pragmatic approaches: Every complete utterance is a sentence (cf. Paul 1880, p. 197, Delbrück 1901, pp. 136–154)

How to motivate different sentence types? I

1. **Intonation contour:**

- 1.1 Polar questions in Russian, Portuguese, Hungarian (cf. Ultan 1978, p. 219, Siemund 2001): study of 53 languages: vast majority final rise or some sort of higher pitch for coding of polar questions
- 1.2 Exclamatives in German (cf. Batliner 1988, Truckenbrodt 2013)

2. **Clefts:** e.g. Benue-Kwa content questions

3. **Word order:** Polar questions in Germanic, French, exclamatives in English

How to motivate different sentence types? I

4. **Presence of marker:** Polar questions in Mandarin, Yorùbá, Kom, exclamatives in Mandarin, sentence final particles in Cantonese, Atlantic-Congo, ?modal particles in Indo-European
5. **Special word forms:** question pronouns in Mandarin, Indo-European, Atlantic-Congo
6. **Absence of canonical markers and constituents** (e.g. finiteness, subjects, predicates): interrogative and exclamative sluices in Arabic, Hungarian, Indo-European

Seidel (1935, pp. 7–8)

- ▶ Most ancient Greek grammarians were not interested in syntax.
- ▶ Assumption: Order of words = order of things
- ▶ First treatments of syntax in Plato's *Cratylus* (425. A)
- ▶ No clear distinction between form (syntactic categories) and function (meaning)
- ▶ Different ancient Greek terms (*protasis*, *lógos*) that are translated as *sentence* or *Satz* in German

The sentence in Plato's *Cratylus*

[...] and so, too, we shall apply letters to the expression of objects, either single letters when required, or several letters ; and so we shall form syllables, as they are called, and from syllables make nouns and verbs ; and thus, at last, from the combinations of nouns [ὀνόματα]¹ and verbs [ῥήματα]² arrive at language, large and fair and whole ; and as the painter made a figure, even so shall we make speech by the art of the namer or the rhetorician, or by some other art.

Plato, Cratylus (425. A)³

¹ Ónomata 'names', translation JM.

² Rhémata 'verbs', translation JM.

³ Quoted according the English translation edited by Jowett (1892, p. 370).



The sentence (protasis) in Aristotle's *Analytica Priora*

Der Satz [Πρότασις] ist eine bejahende oder verneinende Aussage [λόγος].

*Aristotle, Analytica Priora (I 1, 24a 16.)*⁴

A premiss [Πρότασις] then is a sentence [λόγος] affirming or denying one thing of another.

*Aristotle, Analytica Priora (I 1, 24a 16.)*⁵

- ▶ Focus on assertions
- ▶ For many German grammarians reference as sentence definition

⁴Quoted according the German translation edited by Kirchmann 1877.

⁵Quoted according the English translation edited by A. J. Jenkinson.

Adelung's Umständliches Lehrgebäude (1782, pp. 567–568):

[...] so erfordert eine jede klare Vorstellung drey Theile: den Nahmen des Dinges, die Bestimmung desselben und das Verhältniß oder die Verbindung der Bestimmung mit dem Dinge. Der erste Theil oder das Ding, welches den Eindruck auf uns gemacht hat, heißt das Subject oder der Gegenstand der Vorstellung. Die beyden übrigen machen das Prädicat aus; beyde zusammen genommen heissen ein Satz. Da die Rede nichts anders ist, als der hörbare andern vernehmliche Ausdruck unserer klaren Vorstellungen, so kann sie auch nicht anders beschaffen seyn, sondern sie zerfällt in Sätze, deren jeder aus einem Subjecte und dessen Prädicate besteht.

Sweet (1892, p. 157) New English Grammar.

§451. As every sentence is the expression of a thought, and as thought consists in joining together subject and predicate, and as the idea of predication is expressed in English by a (finite) verb, it follows that every normal English sentence ought to contain at least two words—a subject-word and a predicative verb. Hence also every group of words which contains a verb is, grammatically speaking, a sentence.



Summary: traditional (Indo-European) view:

Prototypical sentences comprise:

- ▶ Subject
- ▶ Predicate (finite verb)

Limitations of traditional definitions

Some questions about sentences (*Sätze*)/sentence forms (*Satzformen*) (cf. Paul, 1880, pp. 197–199, 1920; Delbrück, 1893, pp. 73–77, 1901, pp. 143–145; Wundt 1901, pp. 71–82, Bloomfield (1933, ???), Seidel 1935, pp. 72–76 for similar observations)

1. What about imperatives? – They lack an overt subject in most languages

- (1)
 - a. YORÙBÁ: Wá! ‘Come!’
 - b. MANDARIN: Lá! ‘Come!’

2. What about pro-drop languages?

- (2)
 - a. GREEK: Gráphō ‘I write.PRS.1S’
 - b. HUNGARIAN: Alszik. ‘S/he sleep.PRS.3S’

Limitations of traditional definitions I

3. What about subjectless impersonal predicates and passives (Bloomfield 1933, p. 174)?

(3) Jetzt wird getanzt.
now PASS.AUX.3S dance-PPP
'Some dancing is going on now/Now we dance.'

(4) Mir ist schlecht.
me.DAT is bad
'I feel sick.'

4. What about vocatives in call function (cf. Paul, 1880, pp. 192–193, 1920, p. 130, Delbrück 1901, pp. 143–145, Wundt 1901, pp. 74–75)?

- (5) a. CZECH: Barbaro! 'Barbara.voc'
b. MENOMINEE (Algic):[nɛʔnɛ:h]! 'my mother.voc'
← NOMINATIVE [neki:jah]⁶

⁶As quoted in Bloomfield and Hockett (1962, pp. 132–133).

Limitations of traditional definitions II

5. Nominal sentences e.g. in Arab (6) and Hungarian (7) (cf. Reckendorf 1899, pp. 169–170, Delbrück 1901, pp. 145–149, Wundt 1901, pp. 78–82, Paul (1920, p. 129), Bloomfield 1933, pp. 172–173)

(6) Ana tawilun.
 I big
 ‘I am big’

(7) Szomorú
 sad
 ‘S/he is sad.’

(8) Warum so betrübt, Herr Thurnherr?⁷
 why so sad Mr. Turnherr?
 ‘Why so sad, Mr. Thurnherr?’

⁷<https://www.bazonline.ch/warum-so-betruebt-herr-thurnherr-166324671563>, accessed 23/08/2025.

6. What about non-finite presentatives (cf. Jolly 1873, p. 182, Paul 1880, p. 197, 1920, pp. 121, 137; Delbrück 1893, pp. 73–77, Akmajian 1984, Lambrecht 1990)?

(9) Ich ein Lügner?

I a liar

‘Me a liar?’

(10) Ich dir danken?

I you.DAT thank.INF

‘Me thank you?’

7. What about verbless directives (cf. Paul, p. 197 (1880, p. 197, 1920, pp. 134–135), Wundt 1900, p. 251, Akmajian 1984, p. 21, Schwabe 1994, Jackendoff and Pinker 2005, p. 220, Jacobs 2008, p. 22, Wilder 2008, Ørsnes 2011)?

(11) Bier her⁸

(12) Off with his head!

(13) Wohin mit der Tasche?⁹
 where.to with the-DAT bag
 ‘Where to with the bag?’

⁸As quoted in Paul (1880, p. 52).

⁹As quoted in Schwabe (1994, p. 52).

8. Root infinitives, directive infinitives, directive participles and related phenomena (cf. –Paul 1920, p. 135; –Delbrück 1893, pp. 73–77, Delbrück 1901, p. 137)?

(14) Den Rappen gezäumt!¹⁰
the.M.ACC black.horse-ACC bridle-PPP

(15) Absitzen!¹¹
dismount-INF

(16) Ins Feld, in die Freiheit gezogen!¹²
into.the field in the freedom trek-PPP

¹⁰Delbrück 1901, p. 137.

¹¹Paul 1920, p. 135

¹²Quoted as in Friedrich Schiller *Reiterlied* (1797), (cf. Paul 1920, p. 135).

9. Interrogative sluices (cf. Delbrück 1901, p. 141, Merchant 2001, Ginzburg 2012)?

(17) Was?¹³
 What

10. Exclamative sluices (cf. Wundt 1900, p. 251, Wundt 1901, p. 79)?

(18) Welch eine Wendung durch Gottes
 which a twist through god-GEN
 Fügung!¹⁴
 fate
 ‘What a twist throug God’s providence’

¹³Quoted as in Delbrück (1901, p. 141).

¹⁴Quoted as in Wundt (1900, p. 251).

Limitations of traditional definitions VII

11. Exclamations (cf. Delbrück (1901, p. 143), Quirk et al. 1985, pp. 849–852)

(19) Ein weißer Hase!
 a.M.S.NOM white-M.S.NOM rabbit

12. Greetings, well-wishes (cf. Delbrück 1901, p. 141, Matthews 1993, p. 90, Ginzburg 2012)?

(20) Nabend¹⁵
 good-M.S.ACC=evening

13. Expressions of consent or dissent (cf. Delbrück 1901, p. 141)?

(21) gut!¹⁶
 good

¹⁵Quoted as in Delbrück (1901, p. 141).

¹⁶Quoted as in Delbrück (1901, p. 141).

Limitations of traditional definitions VIII

14. Response particles (cf. Wundt 1901, p. 73, Delbrück 1901, pp. 141–142, Paul 1920, p. 129, Ginzburg 2012)?

- (22) a. A: Bist du das gewesen?¹⁷
PRF.AUX.2S you that be-PPP
'Was that you?'
b. B: Ja/nein/gewiss/freilich/doch
yes/no/certainly/indeed/yes

15. Short answers (cf. Wundt 1900, p. 255, Paul 1920, p. 129, Matthews 1993, p. 90, Ginzburg 2012)?

- (23) a. A: Wer hat dich geschlagen?¹⁸
who PRF.AUX.3S you beat-PPP
'Who did beat you?'
b. B: Max

¹⁷As quoted in Paul (1920, p. 129).

¹⁸As quoted in Paul (1920, p. 129).

16. Interjections (cf. Paul 1880, pp. 189–190, 192–193, 1920, 353–354 §246; Delbrück 1893, pp. 73–77, 1901, p. 145, Quirk et al. 1985, p. 853)?

(24) Au!¹⁹

(25) Herrje(sus)!²⁰
Lord.jesus

(26) Ach mînes libes²¹
oh my-GEN body-GEN

¹⁹Delbrück 1893, p. 75

²⁰Paul 1880, p. 189

²¹Paul 1920, p. 353

17. Aphoristic comments, Parental root conditionals (cf. Sweet 1892, p. 158,)

(27) First come, first served.²²

(28) Pas de bras, pas de chocolate.
no of arms no of chocolate
'No arms, no chocolate.'

²²As quoted in Sweet 1892, p. 158.

How W.E.I.R.D are traditional sentence definitions?

Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan (2010); Blasi et al. (2022):
WEIRD bias in cognitive science:

- ▶ Western
- ▶ Educated
- ▶ Industrialized
- ▶ Rich
- ▶ Democratic

Criticism of Eurocentrism in linguistics

- ▶ Wundt (1901, pp. 75–76, 81) Delbrück's understanding of the sentence is based exclusively on Indo-European languages ignoring all the languages outside e.g. Yakut/Sakha (Turkic), Mande (Atlantic-Congo) and Nama (Khoe-Kwadi)
- ▶ Against common assumption that each of the world's languages reflects a different stage of development
- ▶ Utterances in any possible languages are expression of the human mind E.g. Paul (1920, pp. 126, 138, 150) repeatedly mentions more and less developed languages

Two approaches

1. Form-centered definition:
 - 1.1 Sweet (1892, p. 170): Sentences defined as combination of subject with predicate (finite verb)
 - 1.2 Chomsky (1982, p. 10): EPP subjects may lack phonological form/remain unexpressed/covert
2. Pragmatic definition: complete utterance
 - 2.1 Paul (1880, p. 197), Paul (1920, p. 121): Combination of semantic representations, sentences can be non-finite
 - 2.2 Delbrück (1893), Delbrück (1901)
 - 2.3 Wundt (1901, pp. –82):
3. ?Unified approach possible? Appropriate level of abstraction

Strictly form-centered approaches

Sweet (1892, pp. 157–158): English has several sentence-words/one-word-sentences

1. Consisting of subject-word: *John!* I ask John to come—to attend to me'
 2. Consisting of predicate-word: *come*= 'I command you to come'
 3. Consisting of some other word: *yes*= 'I agree with you'/'I will do so'; *no, alas*= 'I am sorry for it
 4. Consisting of other word in which ideas of subject-word and imperative-word are condensed (aphoristic comments): *the more the merrier, better late than never, measure for measure*
- But: *From a grammatical point of view these condensed sentences are hardly sentences at all, but rather something intermediate between word and sentence.*

Paul 1880–1920: A more abstract definition

- ▶ Distinction between phonological form and mental representations of words and phrases
- ▶ Sentence defined as combination of *Subjekt* and *Prädikat* (cf. Paul 1920: 121, 129–130, 353)
- ▶ But any of them may remain covert:
 1. Imperatives (+covert SUBJ)
 2. Pro-drop languages (+covert SUBJ)
 3. Verbless utterances (+covert PRED)
 4. Vocatives (+ covert PRED)
 5. Interjections (+ covert SUBJ, causer of emotion)
- ▶ Sentence needn't contain V_{fin} (p. 1920:121, 353)
- ▶ Predicate can be extended: including objects (p.143)
- ▶ Declarative clauses as least marked (p. 134)
- ▶ Phrase structure trees always binary branching (cf. Paul 1880, pp. 197–198)

Paul (1880, p. 197):

Am meisten nähern sich dem charakter der ursprünglichen sätze solche satzformen, die sich den gewöhnlichen constructionsregeln entziehen, die namentlich kein verbum finitum enthalten, vgl. etwa auforderungen wie bier her, tür zu, hand auf, gewehr über, oder fragen und ausrufe wie Karl tot?(!), er ein mörder?(!). Solche sätze werden jetzt zwar auch nach analogie gebildet, aber die ersten muster dafür sind jedenfalls erst durch urschöpfung entstanden, nachdem im allgemeinen die analogische bildung der sätze mit verbum finitum länger herrschend geworden war.

Paul (1880, pp. 197–198):

Das wesen des satzes besteht darin, dass mehrere vorstellungscomplexe in beziehung zu einander gesetzt werden durch nebeneinanderstellung der wörter, an die sie sich angeschlossen haben. [...]

Abgesehen von den einfachsten verbalformen, sind dazu sätze aus mindestens drei elementen erforderlich.

Drei elemente können nicht mit einem male von der seele unter einander verknüpft werden, sondern es werden zunächst zwei verknüpft und dann das dritte an eins von beiden oder an die verbindung angeknüpft

More general definition: Paul

Paul (1920:§85, trans. by J.P. Hopper):

the sentence is a linguistic expression symbolizing the fact that the combining of several representations or groups of representations in the mind of the speaker has been completed. It is also the means by which the same combination of the same representations is reproduced in the mind of the hearer.

More general definition: Paul

Paul (1920:§85, trans. by J.P. Hopper):

I have chosen this very general formulation in order to embrace all the different kinds of sentences and to counter many narrower formulations, such as the widespread misconception that the sentence must contain a finite verb. Sequences like those in 1 are in my view just as valid sentences as the “man is alive”, or “he is dead”:

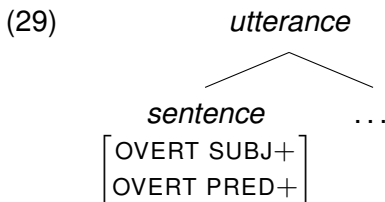
- 1 a. *Lt. Omnia praeclara rara* ‘All beautiful things [are] rare’
- b. *Lt. Summum ius summa iniuria* ‘Extreme laws [lead to] extreme injustice’
- c. *Germ. Träume Schäume* ‘Dreams [are] foam’
- d. *Germ. Ich ein Lügner?* ‘Me, a liar?’
- e. *Germ. Ich dir danken?* ‘I thank you?’

Delbrück 1893, p. 75, Delbrück 1901, pp. 136–145: against Paul, there are sentences that consist of one constituent only:

Ein Satz ist eine in artikulierter Rede erfolgende Äußerung, welche dem Sprechenden und Hörenden als ein zusammenhängendes und abgeschlossenes Ganzes erscheint.

Even more abstract: Delbrück I

- ▶ Utterance that appears complete to speaker and hearer
- ▶ Sentences may consist of one element only: vocatives, interjections (Delbrück 1901, pp. 137, 140–141, 143–145)
- ▶ Alternative: type hierarchy



Wundt (1900, p. 240):

Hiernach können wir den Satz nach seinen objectiven wie subjectiven Merkmalen definieren als den sprachlichen Ausdruck für die willkürliche Gliederung einer Gesamtvorstellung in ihre logische Beziehungen zu einander gesetzten Bestandtheile.

Back to more formal: Wundt's *sentence equivalents* I

- ▶ Sentences are the expression of an intentional structuring of mental presentations into an overall presentation by means of logical relations (cf. Wundt 1900, p. 240)
- ▶ Complete sentences involve at least two phonologically represented 'main constituents' (cf. Wundt 1900, pp. 241–242, 1901, p. 73)
- ▶ Sentence equivalents: Utterances that lack essential parts but which fulfill the same function (cf. Wundt 1900, pp. 233–234, 241–243, 1901, pp. 73–74):
 - ▶ Response particles
 - ▶ Constituent answers
 - ▶ Vocatives
 - ▶ Interjections

Bloomfield's *favorite* and *minor sentence types*

Bloomfield (1933, pp. 171–173, 174, 176–177, 11.4):

► English has two *favorite sentence types*:

1. Actor-action phrases

- (30) a. John ran away?
b. Who ran away?
c. Did john ran away?

2. Command (infinitive verb without modifiers)

- (31) a. John ran away?
b. Who ran away?
c. Did john ran away?

► Not all sentence forms have bipartite structures

1. Commands (imperatives)
2. Impersonal predicates in German

Bloomfield's *minor sentence types*

Bloomfield (1933, pp. 171–173, 176–177, 11.4): *minor sentence types*

1. Interjections: *ouch, oh, sh, gosh, hello, sir, ma'm, yes*
2. Phrases, secondary interjections: *dear me, goodness me, goodness gracious, goodness sakes alive, oh dear, by golly, you angel, please, thank you, good-bye.*
3. Completive type (answers to questions): *this one. Tomorrow morning. Gladly, if I can. Whenever you're ready. Here. When? With whom? Mr. Brown Mr. Smith Drugs State Street yes, no*
4. Exclamatory minor sentence: *Ouch, damn it!, This way, please!*
5. Vocatives: *Hello John! Come here, little boy You with the glasses!*
6. Aphoristic type: *The more you have, the more you want, The more, the merrier. First come, first served. Old saint, young sinner.*

The Extended Projection Principle

Some of the older definitions reminiscent of EPP by Chomsky (1981, pp. 29, 38) *Lectures on Government and Binding*:

(32) Projection Principle

Representations at each syntactic level (i.e., LF, and D- and S-structure) are projected from the lexicon, in that they observe the subcategorization properties of lexical items.

Chomsky (1982, pp. 9–10, 1995, p. 49):

I will henceforth refer to the Projection Principle along with the requirement that clauses have subjects as the Extended Projection Principle.

- ▶ Remark: EPP defined in terms of *clauses* rather than *sentences*

The Extended Projection Principle (Rothstein's version)

Rothstein's (1983, pp. 129–131) version:

(33) Extended Projection Principle:

For a sentence of L to be well-formed both syntactic and lexical functions must be appropriately saturated: i.e., the Projection Principle and the Predicate-linking rule must be satisfied.

1. All arguments are projected
2. Requirement that clauses have subjects: $S \rightarrow NP\ INFL\ VP$

The EPP in Government and Binding

- ▶ Just as with Paul, subjects may remain without phonological realisation
- ▶ But what can count as a subject is much more limited

Matthews (1993, p. 90) sentences are defined by two criteria:

1. Completeness
 - 1.1 Contains a predication
 - 1.2 Standalone utterance
2. Correct organisation of constituents
 - 2.1 Order
 - 2.2 Agreement
 - 2.3 lexical coherence (e.g. Her dress was blonde.)
 - 2.4 does not yield break in communication

What does completeness mean?

According to Matthews (1993, p. 90)

- ▶ Constituent responses are not complete, only licenced by previous question:

(34) a. A: What was the color of her dress?
b. B: Pale yellow/#Blonde.

- ▶ Long tradition to consider greetings, well wishes and imperatives and other minor sentence types of abbreviations (cf. *nonsentences* in Quirk et al. 1985, pp. 849–852)

(35) Thank you ← I thank you.

(36) Come in! ← You may come in.

- ▶ Whenever utterances need be licensed by a preceding question they are not complete.

Bolinger (1972, pp. 639–641), Bartsch (1976, pp. 521–524, 527), Schmerling (1976, pp. 41–44, 50), Höhle (1982, p. 2.3.2), Ginzburg (1996, 2012), Steedman (2014, pp. 14–16): in some languages word order and the placement of nuclear stress in declarative clauses is determined by context, by a question under discussion (QUD):

- ▶ These utterances maybe more informative than simple constituent answers
- ▶ But they also accommodate a question under discussion if uttered out of the blue.
- ▶ However, greetings like *Nabend* can be uttered out of the blue and according to Matthew's criteria to completeness would be considered as complete

QUDs, focus, word order, nuclear stress

Narrow focus (e.g. on subject) requires in many languages special word order, stress placement, or sentence types (e.g. clefts)

(37) Wer hat dem Kind das Buch
 who-NOM DET.M.DAT child DET.M.ACC book offer-PPP
 geschenkt?

‘Who offered the book to the child?’

- a. KARL hat dem Kind das Buch geschenkt.
- b. # Karl hat dem Kind das BUCH geschenkt.
- c. # Karl hat dem KIND das Buch geschenkt.
- d. # Karl hat dem KIND das Buch geSCHENkt.
- e. Das Buch hat dem Kind KARL geschenkt.

(38) It was Karl who gave the book to the child

- ▶ Common assumption: Each declarative clause is licensed by a question under discussion

Whenever some one utters something, this person wants some thing (from the addressee).

- ▶ Wundt (1900, p. 239): Each sentence formation is a voluntary act
- ▶ Zaefferer (2001, p. 223): Each (non-expressive) speech act is intentional
- ▶ Truckenbrodt (2006, pp. 263–264): All sentential speech acts are volitional

Truckenbrodt (2006, pp. 263–264):

- ▶ **Imperative:** *S* wants from *A* that *A* makes *p* become true
- ▶ **Declarative:** *S* wants from *A* that it is common ground that *p*
- ▶ **Interrogative:** *S* wants from *A* that it is common ground whether *p*/what/where....
- ▶ Any utterance is a predication of the type *want*(*S*,*A*,*x*), whereas *x* can be any kind of action

- ▶ If every utterance contains a predication of the type $want(S,A,x)$, it is complete in the sense of many sentence definitions: it involves a (covert) predication (speaker is predicated of an intention)
- ▶ Was Paul right after all?
- ▶ Similar idea of speech act predication: Ross, 1970 and its adaptations in Minimalism Speas (2004), Speas (2004), Hill (2007), Miyagawa (2022) SpeechActPhrase, SpeakerPhrase, Addressee Phrase above CP

Word order variation in imperatives

Word order variation possible in non-declarative clauses:

(39) a. Stell den Koffer bitte ins ECK.
 put-2S.IMP the.ACC suitcase please in.the corner

b. # [Den Koffer_i]^{L*+H} stell ____i bitte ins
 the-ACC suitcase put-2S.IMP please in.the
 ECK.
 corner

Interaction with questions: narrow focus with imperatives

- (40) Was soll ich mit deinem KOFFer tun?
what shall I with your-DAT do-
- a. Stell den Koffer bitte ins ECK.
put-2S.IMP the.ACC suitcase please in.the corner
- b. [Den Koffer_i]^{L*+H} stell _i bitte ins
the-ACC suitcase put-2S.IMP please in.the
ECK.
corner

Question with VP-focus not compatible with imperatives with topicalisation

(41) Was soll ich TUN?
what shall I do-INF

- a. Stell den Koffer bitte ins ECK.
put-2S.IMP the.ACC suitcase please in.the corner
- b. # [Den Koffer_i]^{L*+H} stell _i bitte ins
the-ACC suitcase put-2S.IMP please in.the
ECK.
corner

Contrastive Topics in Imperatives

L*+H accent in German marks utterance as incomplete/partial answer of superordinate QUD (cf. Büring 2003, pp. 522–524)

(42) Was soll ich mit deinen Sachen tun?
what shall I with your-DAT things do-

- a. [Den Koffer_i]^{L*+H} stell _i bitte ins
the-ACC suitcase put-2S.IMP please in.the
ECK.
corner
- b. [Den Pass_i]^{L*+H} leg _i bitte ins
the-ACC passport put-2S.IMP please in.the
RegAL.
shelve

Contrastive Topics in Declaratives and imperatives

L*+H accent in German marks utterance as incomplete/partial answer of superordinate QUD (cf. van Kuppevelt 1995, Büring 2003, pp. 515, 522–524)

1. How was the concert?

1.1 Was the sound good?

– *No, it was awful*

1.2 How was the audience?

– *They were enthusiastic*

1.3 How was the band?

1.3.1 How was the drummer?

– *just fantastic*

1.3.2 And what about the singer?

– *Better than ever*

1.4 Did they play old songs?

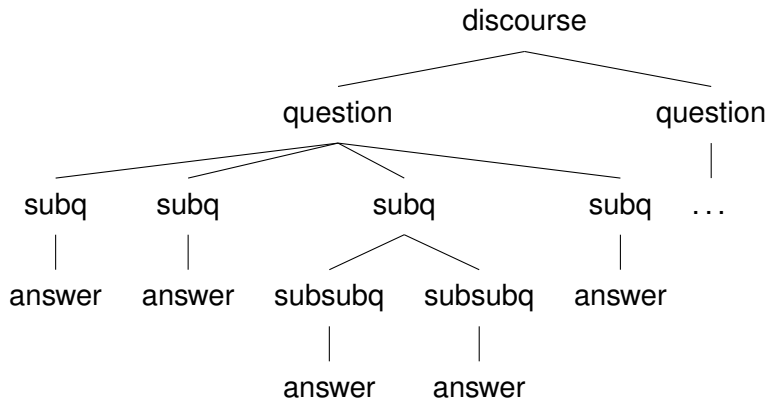
– *not a single one*

2. So what did you do after the concert?

2.1 ...

Contrastive Topics in Declaratives and imperatives

Büring 2003, p. 516



Using CT markers, the speaker indicates that the answer is only a partial answer to some superordinate QUD:

(43) (How was the band?)

- a. [_{CT} The drummer] was just fantastic.
- b. ...

The *Redwoods* treebank (110K sentences) contains about 250 imperatives with topicalised adjuncts:²³

- (44)
- a. Next time do as he says.
 - b. Something may happen to me, and in that event please give them this letter.
 - c. In case of fire, break this window.
 - d. In the Login Window Preferences window, select the Security tab.
 - e. In wintertime, follow the same trail.

²³Redwoods Treebank, courtesy of Dan Flickinger.

Are directive speech act licensed by QUDs?

- ▶ Imperatives (and other directives) can contain topicalisation with contrastive topics and other topics
- ▶ Contrastive topics refer to superordinate QUDs
- ▶ Conclusion: QUDs are needed to account for word order/nuclear stress variation, and topicalisation

(45) What should I do?

(46) What am I allowed do?

(47) Where should put the suitcase?

(48) What should I put in the basement?

- ▶ Many languages allow word order variations

QUD and speech act types

Strong QUD hypothesis

Each utterance is licensed by a (accommodated) QUD

Weak QUD hypothesis

Only assertions and certain other speech acts are licensed by a (accommodated) QUD

Default QUD hypothesis

Only assertions are licensed by a (accommodated) QUD

Strong QUD hypothesis – some ideas

- ▶ Most general QUD:
 - ▶ Situation in which A is approached some stranger B who gazes A into the eyes:
 - ▶ A most likely will think q_0 *What do you want?*
 - ▶ B ascribes q_0 to A as a QUD and responds p_1 which has a form that can be licensed by q_0
- ▶ ?QUD licensing questions: *What do yo want to know from me?*
- ▶ QUDs probably better considered as propositional abstracts than questions formulated in natural language (cf. Ginzburg and Sag 2000)

Conclusions

- ▶ Common assumption: Each declarative is licensed by a QUD
- ▶ No utterance is completely independent from context
- ▶ Each utterance involves a predication at speech act level
- ▶ They fulfill most of the standard sentence definitions
- ▶ There is evidence that directive speech act need the concept of QUD too, in order to account for word order variation
- ▶ Are all utterances licensed by QUDs?



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