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An Analysis of German Auxiliary Flip

## 1. Overview

German is a verb-second (V2) language, a trait which it shares with a majority of the other languages found in the Germanic language family. As such, in any matrix clause, the finite verb must appear as the second “element”. In German, an “element” can be represented by any phrasal unit, and this can range from a single noun to a prepositional phrase, and in particularly extreme cases, to even infinitival phrases consisting of a verb and its complement. When a sentence consists of multiple verbs, any non-finite verbs must appear at the end of the sentence, stacked in ascending order. This location of stacked verbs is generally referred to as the *Nachfeld*, or “after-field,” and it is important to note that only verbs appear in this part of the sentence; any complements or adjuncts must precede the *Nachfeld* in the *Mittelfeld*, or “middle-field.”

To account for this word-order, the most accepted analysis states that in deeper structures, German is actually a verb-final language. The uppermost verb then moves out of V to T to pick up tense and inflectional features; then, this verb moves once again to C, where it remains. Finally, the phrase that is fronted moves to SpecCP. In most instances, this phrase will be the subject DP, but these movement rules explain why such other variations are possible. Example (1) below presents the deep structure for

\begin{abstract}

Auxiliary flip is an uncommon verbal ordering that only occurs in German subordinate clauses with three or more verbs, one of which must be an auxiliary modal verb. Though traditionally this structure has been analyzed using syntactic formalisms outside the realm of transformational syntax, this paper proposes a description of this phenomenon through the addition of an upper complementizer layer to VP and movement of phrasal complements to the specifier of this layer.

\end{abstract}

\section{Introduction}

German is a verb-second (V2) language, a trait which it shares with a majority of the other languages found in the Germanic language family. As such, in any matrix clause, the finite verb must appear as the second “element”. In German, an “element” can be represented by any phrasal unit, and this can range from a single noun to a prepositional phrase; in particularly extreme cases, these can even be infinitival phrases consisting of a verb and its complement. When a sentence consists of multiple verbs, any non-finite verbs must appear at the end of the sentence, stacked in ascending order. This location of stacked verbs is generally referred to as the \textit{Nachfeld}, or “after-field,” and it is important to note that only verbs appear in this part of the sentence; any complements or adjuncts must precede the \textit{Nachfeld} in the \textit{Mittelfeld}, or “middle-field.”

To account for this word-order, the most accepted analysis states that in deeper structures, German is actually a verb-final language (Scagalone, 1981). The uppermost verb moves from V to T to pick up tense and inflectional features; then, this verb moves once again to C, where it remains. Finally, the phrasal element that is fronted moves to SpecCP. In most instances, this phrase will be the subject DP, but these movement rules explain why such other variations are possible. Figure \ref{parse:deepMatrix} in the appendix presents the structure for a German matrix clause with two verbs using this analysis, including movement around the tree as required. It is important to note that in SpecCP, a number of different elements are possible; however, each of these can be accounted for using the analysis mentioned above.\footnote{The only exception to this is element 6, the bare infinitive \textit{lesen} 'read' being fronted. A solution to this structure will be discussed later on in this paper}

Moreover, there exists additional evidence for this type of underlying structure: in a subordinate clause with an overt complementizer, this movement of the finite verb from T to C does not occur. Instead, the verb remains at the end of the sentence in T. This can be accounted for by the fact that C is already filled with a complementizer and therefore there is nowhere for the verb to move to. With this, no element is fronted in the sentence; the uppermost element is found in C.