
Only just CP? Rethinking classification criteria for sentence types theories

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We argue that sentence type theories must not be defined too narrowly syntactic, but must take into account lexical material outside the left periphery (for German: modal particles) and prosodic markers.

V-to-C movement in German is often labeled as main clause formation. Thus, V-last orders may be *mislabelled* as (in-) subordinated (e.g. Evans 2007, Lohnstein 2000): V-last exclamatives, e.g., are not (in-) subordinated, and neither are deliberative V-last questions. Minimal changes in prosody or modal particle use, however, can lead to subordination with syntactically near-identical structures. V1 exclamatives and conditionals are not questions, despite their CP syntax – but changes in prosody can bring about the interrogative interpretation.

We argue that empty prefields denote that the clauses' truth values are not evaluated *vis-a-vis* a world under discussion (cf., similarly, Reis & Wöllstein 2010). Boundary tones (L% vs. H%) differentiate truth value assessments. Accent tones (H* vs. L*) signal whether the proposition is to be added to the CG or not (Truckenbrodt 2013, Kaiser 2014). Exclamative accents (e.g. L+H*) distinguish clause types and so do modal particles (Struckmeier 2014), we show.

Multi-factor sentence type theories of this type will help avoid the miscategorizations of purely syntactic approaches, we hope.

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