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## Restructuring the CP in L2 German

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### 1. Structure Building in L2A

Similar to what has been proposed for L1 learners (Radford 1990; Clahsen, Eisenbeiss & Vainikka 1994), we have proposed that adult L2 learners gradually build up syntactic structure (Vainikka and Young-Scholten 1994; 1995; 1996a,b, 1998a,b,c), that all language learners commence acquisition by positing only lexical projections and then in sequence gradually posit the functional projections relevant to the input language. L2 learners start with lexical projections adopted from their L1 and then build functional structure with no subsequent reliance on their L1.

At the earliest stages of acquisition (uninstructed) adult German L2 learners whose native languages are English, Korean, Italian, Spanish and Turkish all initially transfer the headedness of their native language VPs, and posit only a VP. While still at this Minimal Tree stage, the head-initial-VP Italian, Spanish and English speakers switch their VP headedness to the head-final German value. L2 learners' first verbal functional projection is a head-initial projection, similar to what has been found for L1 German children (Clahsen 1991). Although the German AgrP is head-final and the CP head-initial, this projection is clearly not a CP. Neither is it a transferred projection, as the data from Korean and Turkish learners do not reveal L1-based head-final functional projections. Thus from the point at which L2 learners' VP headedness is target-like, the development of functional syntax is constrained by their access to UG, with no recourse to their native language syntax.

Other well-known approaches such as Full Transfer/Full Access (FT/FA, Schwartz and Sprouse 1994) assume adult learners have continued direct access to UG but claim that the L2 learner's complete L1 syntactic structure constitutes the initial state. Unlike FT/FA, Structure Building (SB) accounts for the systematic, ordered appearance of functional elements in learners' production (Table 1). While FT/FA downplays morphology, Structure Building holds that the sequential emergence of functional morphology provides extra-syntactic confirmation of the learner's developing functional syntax. Crucially, SB holds that syntactic development is often morphologically revealed.

Under Structure Building, the early appearance for all German learners of demonstrative pronoun *das* [das] and copular *ist* vs. the later appearance of complementizer *dass* [das] and auxiliary *ist* is expected. The existence of functional cognates in the learner's L1 morphology has little effect on a pattern observed for English, Korean, Italian, Spanish and Turkish learners of German..

**Table 1. The emergence of functional syntax and morphology**

criteria/STAGE	VP	FP	AgrP	CP
verb raising	none	optional	frequent	obligatory
overt pronom. subs	few	some	common	obligatory
modals, auxiliaires	none	some	common	obligatory
agreement paradigm	lacking	lacking	acquired	acquired
complementizers	none	none	some	yes
complex WH-Qs	*none	none	some	yes

\*Target-like formulaic WH-questions may appear at the pre-CP stages

While the initial-state existence of Minimal Trees has come under fire (but sometimes with data unrepresentative of the earliest stages), there is agreement that early grammars lack a CP. When it emerges it may not an L1-based one. Arguing against Minimal Trees, Grondin and White (1993) and Lakshmanan (1993)/Lakshmanan and Selinker (1994) show development from AgrP to CP with little L1-influence for child L2 French and English, respectively.

Adopting an SB approach leads to the prediction that there will be an absence of CP-related constructions until the later stages of acquisition. Given the assumption that WH-questions involve a fully articulated CP, SB predicts that learners will not produce any such questions until after AgrP has been projected. Yet WH-questions are found at early stages of development. In what follows, we address this problem and then turn to the L2 development of the CP.

Data from the early stages of adult L2 acquisition contain WH-questions, and the child language literature is also full of examples of children's early WH-questions. In their earliest questions, children do not produce tensed auxiliaries or finite verbs, but only the bare verb stem. Roeper and Rohrbacher (1994) note that only 5% (4/ 82) of Adam's WH-questions from 2;3 to 2;8 contain a finite verb. This percentage rises to 46% (108/234) by age 2;8-2;11. Do these questions require a CP? Even in the adult grammar, WH-questions need not involve one (deVilliers 1990, Rizzi 1990, Vainikka 1993/4). How, exactly, can we account for these early WH-questions if no CP has been projected?<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Syntax and the early acquisition of WH-questions

L2 learners' knowledge will clearly include the pragmatic discourse function of questions, thus an explanation is needed regarding the location of universal syntactic, semantic and pragmatic information in questions. The standard analysis of WH-questions in the Chomskyan framework assumes involvement of

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1. Some studies of questions, e.g. Park (2000), involve L2 learners from whom data were collected some time after exposure to English began, in this case nine months after arrival in the USA. The young Koreans studied clearly already possessed functional projections: 'May I have paper?', 'Is this easy book?'

a WH-operator located in Spec(CP) which has two functions (Huang 1995): (1) to indicate the sentence is a question (Cheng's (1991) question typing function), and (2) to allow the WH-phrase to take scope over other elements in the clause, e.g. the quantifier in 'What did everyone buy?'. The first function is both a syntactic and a pragmatic one, while the second one is mainly a semantic one, relating to the syntax of Logical Form/LF.

What are the ramifications of a non-CP analysis for the functions of the WH-operator, that of scope and marking clauses as questions? As is clear from literature on scope interaction, quantifiers taking scope are not restricted to the Spec(CP) position. Quantified elements such as *everyone* or *someone* may occur in any NP position in overt syntax, while adjunction to VP or IP is assumed at LF to account for the semantics of scope; for example Huang (1995:137) assumes that *everyone* adjoins to VP at LF. In WH-in-situ languages such as Chinese or Japanese, the WH-phrase occupies various syntactic positions other than Spec(CP) in surface syntax, while at an abstract LF level, the WH-phrase moves to Spec(CP) in order to allow for scope interaction and question interpretation (Huang 1982, 1995). Scope interaction can occur at LF for the early WH-questions L1 and L2 learners produce.

Question typing/selection in non-CP questions in acquisition can be accomplished the same way that it is standardly done for WH-in-situ languages, with the WH-phrase moving to Spec(CP) at LF. Based on both spontaneous and experimental L1 acquisition data, Vainikka and Roeper (1996) argue that abstract operators and the CP projection become productive at the same time.<sup>2</sup>

Evidence that CP has not yet been posited syntactically to make a WH-operator available is learners' non-production of other constructions requiring a WH-operator such as parasitic gaps as in "Which book did John return to Mary without reading?" and long-distance extraction of a WH-phrase as in "Where do you think Mary hid the key?".

We now turn to the syntactic development of two English-speaking learners of German, focusing on their WH-questions and their development of CP.

### 3. Pre-CP stages

The data discussed here come from the VYSA study (Vainikka & Young-Scholten's Americans) of four teenage learners, two of whom will be referred to here, who spent eleven months in German secondary schools while living with German host families. Data were collected on a monthly basis using interviewing techniques and by conducting a number of elicitation tasks. Joan, 16, had a

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2. Note that we are not assuming that the structure at LF and in surface syntax need be identical, since e.g. a surface syntax IP could be mapped to a CP at LF. While many standard operations are structure-preserving, many others involve structure-altering adjunction, and thus a mechanism is needed for mapping distinct structures between LF and surface syntax, even under standard assumptions.

month of Spanish in school, and Paul, 17, had a semester of French, but neither had any prior exposure to German. They arrived in North Rhine Westphalia on July 18, 1996, and after three weeks of their four-week orientation (which included largely ignored grammar-translation-based German instruction), they were interviewed for the first time. One week later they relocated to new host families where they started secondary school.

### 3.1. Early syntactic development

Like the head-initial VP Italian and Spanish learners of German, Joan's and Paul's earliest utterances reflect a bare- (head-initial) VP Stage.

**Table 2. Characteristics of Joan's and Paul's earliest utterances**

	total Ss w/ verbs	modals	auxiliaries	complementizers	complex WH-Qs
Joan I	24	0	2	few	no
Joan II	45	5	8	few	no
Paul I	31	1	0	few	no
Paul II	58	1	0	few	no

Nearly all Joan's and Paul's utterances for which this can be determined are head-initial, and their utterances are consistent with the morpho-syntactic criteria in Table 1. While L1 influence is frequent with respect to content words, little such influence is observed with respect to functional elements.<sup>3</sup> Both the copula (none in session 1, seven for Joan and three for Paul in session II) and agreement on main verbs are rare, and those forms produced give no indication of a productive paradigm.

**Table 3. Joan's and Paul's non-target early main verb suffixes**

session	total with incorrect suffix	main verbs	V-n wrong	V-st wrong	V-e/a wrong	V -0 wrong	V-t wrong
Joan I	18/22	82%	14/17	n/a	4/5	n/a	n/a
Joan II	20/25	80%	11/16	1/1	4/4	3/3	1/1
Paul I	24/30	80%	15/20	0/1	9/9	n/a	n/a
Paul II	43/54	80%	25/31	1/1	6/10	6/7	5/5

Like the Italian, Korean, Spanish and Turkish learners reported on earlier, *-n* is overgeneralized, with some evidence of *-e* (or even *-0*) overgeneralization.<sup>4</sup> (See Vainikka and Young-Scholten 1998a,b for further discussion of their VP Stage).

3. The earliest functional elements Joan produces appear to be borrowed from English, explaining why we find apparent evidence for functional categories.

4. Prévost and White (2000) note that adults acquiring German adopt default *-n* forms in German for verbs in finite contexts resulting in what otherwise look like children's root infinitives.

- (1) a. Peter lernen die Buch. (Paul I)  
Peter learn the book.  
(Peter liest das Buch.)/ 'Peter reads the book.'
- b. Ich trinken Tee immer morgen. (Joan I)  
I drink tea always morning  
(Ich trinke morgens immer Tee.)/ 'I always drink tea in the morning.'
- c. Die Frau liebe Blume. (Joan II)  
the woman love flowers  
(Die Frau liebt die Blumen.)/ 'The woman loves the flowers.'

By sessions three and four – their fourth and fifth months in Germany – the learners reset VP headedness to the head-final German value. This switch is straightforwardly illustrated by data from a task where learners had to produce sentences to describe pictures showing someone engaged in an activity. They were told to focus on what the individuals could(n't) do or did(n't) want to do using the modal forms *kann* and *möchte* (their presence in learners' utterances therefore does not constitute evidence of functional projection). The data collected with this task in Session II reveal all Joan's utterances and 92% of Paul's are VO; in Session III, 60% are OV for Joan and 80% OV for Paul.

- (2) a. Der Mann kann fahren die Motorfahrrad. Paul (II)  
the man can drive the motor-bicycle.  
(Der Mann kann Motorrad fahren.)/ 'The man can ride a motorcycle.'
- b. Er kann ein Bike, ein Motofahrrad fahren. Paul (III)  
He can a bike, a motor-bicycle drive  
(Er kann Motorrad fahren.)/ 'He can ride a motorcycle.'

Around Session III, Joan and Paul posit their first functional projection, which then develops into an AgrP round session IV. Other suffixes have now established themselves as agreement suffixes, yet Paul and Joan enter a transition period when *-st* is overgeneralized (Vainikka and Young-Scholten 1998b) both on main verbs and for the suppletive forms of *sein* and *haben*:

- (3) a. Warum hast ich in Deutschland gehen? (Paul IV)  
why have I to Germany go?  
(Warum bin ich nach Deutschland gegangen?)/  
'Why did I go (come) to Germany?'
- b. Habst du ein Apfelkuchen machen? (Paul IV)  
have you an apple cake make  
(Hast du einen Apfelkuchen gemacht?)/  
'Did you make an apple cake?'

In Session III - their fourth month in Germany - both learners display evidence of verb raising and associated verbal morphology; prior to this point no such evidence exists. At this stage there are virtually no spontaneously produced embedded clauses or overt complementizers, and no other evidence for a CP projection is attested<sup>5</sup>

### 3.2. The status of early L2 WH-Qs

Some WH-questions are attested in the data even before the first functional projection (around session III).<sup>6</sup> The data come from a task where learners were given a WH-word and an infinitive (shown in italics) and asked to form questions:

- (4) a. *Warum sprechen* Deutsch? (Joan II)  
why speak German  
(Warum spricht man Deutsch?)/ 'Why speak German?'
- b. *Wo du fahren?* (Paul II)  
where you drive  
(Wo fährst du?)/ 'Where are you driving?'

These very early WH-questions are taken to involve adjunction of the WH-phrase to the VP, similar to what Radford (1990:134) proposes for early L1 acquisition.<sup>7</sup>

The WH-questions that next emerge occur when learners have posited an IP-level projection, around session III.<sup>6</sup> The analysis provided above applies to the stage at which an AgrP has been posited, but no CP. Some representative

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5. Several task-induced instances of complementizers, including examples of *weil* along with the conjunctions *und* and *aber* are found in the first three sessions. The status of *weil* as a complementizer rather than a conjunction is not clear, especially given matrix word order in clauses beginning with *weil* in current spoken German.

6. On the basis of previous - theory-neutral - studies of L2 English Ellis (1985:60-64) posits the following stages prior to production of target-like WH-questions by learners from various L1 backgrounds: (1) WH-questions produced as holistic chunks; (2) productive WH-questions, but without inversion or auxiliaries; (3) target WH-questions; (4) incorrectly inverted embedded WH-questions.

7. Recall that Joan and Paul posit an AgrP in session IV. However, there is already evidence in session III for a functional projection beyond VP. The analysis provided for AgrP also works for an earlier stage with an IP-level projection.

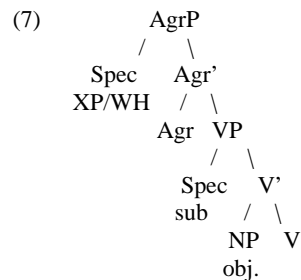
examples are given in (5) and (6). The set in (5) were questions produced spontaneously during a 20-Questions game played in German by the researcher, Joan, Paul and sometimes another German speaker. The participants were instructed to ask information questions, not just the typical yes- no questions:

- (5) a. Wo kannst du kaufen? (Joan IV)  
 where can you buy  
 (Wo kannst du das kaufen?)/ ‘Where can you buy (that)?’
- b. Was arbeitet ihm? (Joan IV)  
 what works him  
 (Was arbeitet/macht er?)/‘What does he do for work?’

Similar examples are found in the two WH-questions contained in an on-line English-to-German translation task

- (6) a. Wo hat das Buch gekauft? oh no, Wo hat sie Buch kaufen? (Joan IV)  
 where has the book bought where has she the book buy  
 (Wo hat sie das Buch gekauft?)/ ‘Where did she buy the book?’
- b. Wo uh hast sie kaufen das or das kaufen? (Paul IV)  
 where have she buy that that buy  
 (Wo hat sie das gekauft?)/ ‘Where did she buy that?’
- c. Was uh hast er getrunken? (Paul IV)  
 what have he drunk  
 (Was hat er getrunken?)/‘What did he drink?’

Rather than involving WH-movement to Spec(CP), these questions can be considered instances of topicalization or scrambling to Spec(AgrP) along the lines of topicalization in Yiddish (Diesing 1990). Such a CP-less structure for questions is reminiscent of the structure proposed for the French *pourquoi* ‘why’ questions in Rizzi (1990), but note that an adjunction analysis is not feasible for our data, given the object WH-questions our learners produce. The WH-question in (6c), for example, would involve the WH-phrase *was* in Spec(AgrP), the auxiliary *hast* in Agr, the subject pronoun *er* in Spec(VP), and the main verb *getrunken* in V. These questions are accounted by the following structure:





#### 4. The later emergence of CP in adult L2A

Previous work on L2 German suggests that learners from various L1 backgrounds (Clahsen & Muysken 1986; 1989 on Romance language and Turkish speakers) use the finite verb in its target, second position in matrix questions (8) prior to producing the verb in its correct final position in embedded clauses (9a) and (9b), if they in fact all reach this later stage.

- (8) Wann will Hans abfahren?  
when wants Hans off-drive  
'When will Hans leave?'
- (9) a. Maria will wissen, wer morgen abfahren kann.  
Maria wants to know, who tomorrow off-drive can  
'Maria wants to know who can leave tomorrow.'
- b. Maria sagt, dass Hans morgen abfahren kann.  
Maria says that Hans tomorrow off-drive can  
'Maria says that Hans can leave tomorrow.'

Joan and Paul also produce finite verbs in non-final position in embedded clauses:

- (10) a. Ich weiss nicht, wie es heisst auf Deutsch. (Joan VII)  
I know not how it is called in German  
'I don't know what it's called in German.'
- b) Ja, ich denke, dass ich habe ja vielleicht Freunden schon gemacht.  
yes I think that I have yes perhaps friends already made  
'Yes, I think that I have perhaps already made friends.' (Joan VII)

To account for the non-target position of the finite verb at this stage, there are two possibilities. One is that learners still have a head-initial AgrP but they have now projected a head-initial CP:

- (11) [<sub>CP</sub> Spec C [<sub>AgrP</sub> Spec Agr [<sub>VP</sub> XP V]]]

The other possibility is that these utterances do not yet involve a CP, but instead movement of the WH-phrase to Spec(AgrP), as was proposed above for the previous stage. We have already addressed how WH-questions can be accounted for without a CP, but embedded clauses also need not involve a CP. For example, Tavokolian's (1981) experimental study showed that at a stage at which children produce conjoined rather than embedded clauses, they also interpret adult relative clauses as two conjoined clauses. She concludes that this analysis is a universal feature of language acquisition.

In session IX Joan and Paul begin to exhibit sensitivity to the mixed headedness of German, i.e. the head-final AgrP and head-initial CP, and they produce head-final embedded WH-questions such as the one in (12a). Embedded clauses with overt complementizers as in (12b) remain head-initial.

- (12) a. Ich möchte wissen, wenn ich flussig Deutsch sprechen können. Joan (IX)  
I want know when I fluently German speak can  
'I want to know when I'll be able to speak German fluently.'
- b. Ja, ok, du musst das erinnern, dass du kommst aus oder von das beste Land...Joan (IX)  
Yes, OK you must that remember that you come out or from the best country  
'Yes, you have to remember that you come out (of) from the the best country.'

In constructions such as embedded WH-questions where the C position lacks overt material because the WH-phrase occurs in Spec (CP), the learners experiment with a non-target head-final CP, including verb raising to the final, represented by (13):

- (13) [<sub>cp</sub> Spec [<sub>AgrP</sub> Spec Agr [<sub>vp</sub> XP V]] C]

To account for the distribution of data pointing to two clear CP constructions with distinct patterns, we propose that the learners make use of two distinct CP projections at this stage. By the end of the twelve months, Joan's German is target-like: her CP is head-initial and her AgrP head-final, as shown in (14).

- (14) [<sub>cp</sub> Spec C [<sub>AgrP</sub> Spec [<sub>vp</sub> XP V] Agr]]

In both embedded declarative clauses and WH-questions, Joan produces finite verbs in target, final position:

- (15) a. Und ich habe mit Markus geredet, so weil Kosta schon ins Bett war. (J XI)  
and I have with M. spoken, so because K. already into bed was  
'And I spoke with Markus because Kosta was already in bed.'
- b. Willst du es wirklich wissen, was wir gemacht haben? (Joan XI)  
want you it really know what we done have  
'Do you really want to know what we did?'

Paul's ever-lagging development is shown to contrast with Joan's in following table. Table 5. shows data from the final session, a week prior to their return to the USA. (During this session only seven embedded clauses were produced for which verb position was ambiguous, and one verb-initial clause was produced.) Paul's data suggest he continues to make use of two CP projections.

**Table 5. Joan's and Paul's final finite verbs in embedded clauses session XI**

learner	declaratives					wh-Qs	relative clauses
	weil	dass	als, ob	wenn	0*		
Joan	9/18 (50%)	7/11 (64%)	3/3 (100%)	13/16 (81%)	0/25 (0%)	34/34 (100%)	4/4 (100%)
Paul	2/13 (15%)	1/7 (14%)	1/1 (100%)	1/6 (17%)	0/17 (0%)	37/40 (93%)	4/4 (100%)

\*Note for such clauses, the finite verb is in second position in German.

## 5. Conclusion

Despite evidence that learners produce WH-questions from the very start of their exposure to a second language, these early questions do not require the projection of a CP, thus posing no threat to the Minimal Trees/Structure Building approach. Learners make use of the syntactic projections available to them in their successive interlanguage grammars to form WH-questions. At the earliest stage, at which only a Minimal Tree exists, the WH-phrase is adjoined to the VP. A few months later, once the learners have posited a functional projection, the WH-phrase can then move and does so, to Spec(AgrP). Further development reveals the WH-phrase in target German position, followed by the finite verb (and subject) in matrix questions. However, the position of the finite verb in embedded clauses reveals the development of the CP to still be incomplete at this stage: matrix word order incorrectly obtains in embedded clauses. The learners' interlanguage grammar then undergoes further reorganization, resulting in finite verbs appearing final in embedded WH-questions, but not in clauses with complementizers. Just before their source of German input is cut off with their return to the USA, in the embedded clauses Joan (and Paul) produce, the finite verb appears in its target position in these clauses.

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