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WORD ORDER AND THE SUBJECT POSITION IN YIDDISH

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0. Introduction

Recent work has produced a number of accounts of verb-second phenomena in those languages which show the familiar main and embedded clause asymmetry, such as Dutch and German. In this paper I will consider Yiddish, which poses problems for these earlier accounts of verb-second in that it does not exhibit the main/subordinate asymmetry with respect to verb-second. I will propose an analysis to account for this Yiddish/German contrast. The analysis will also shed some light on the question of the placement of the subject in phrase structure.

1. Basic Verb-Second Facts in German

For purposes of contrast, I will review a standard analysis of verb-second in Germanic by looking at the basic word order facts German. As shown in example (1), in German, the inflected verb appears in one of two positions. Example (1a) shows that in main clauses the verb appears in the second position.

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This contrasts with the word order in an embedded clause with a complementizer, which is shown in example (1b). Here the inflected verb appears in the clause-final position.

- (1) a. Waltraud **hat** das Buch gekauft.  
Waltraud has the book bought
- b. Sigrid glaubt daß Waltraud das Buch  
Sigrid believes that Waltraud the book  
gekauft **hat**.  
bought has

In the standard analysis this word order contrast is accounted for by proposing that in main clauses the verb moves to Comp. The preverbal position (the [Spec,CP]), then functions as a "topic" position, which in the case of (1a) is filled by the subject NP. In clauses with a complementizer, such as the embedded clause in (1b), the Comp position is filled by the complementizer. Therefore, the verb cannot move to the second position. This leads to the result that verb-second and complementizers appear in complementary distribution (Bach 1962; Bierwisch 1963).

2. Verb-Second in Yiddish

Yiddish, on the other hand, shows a rather different paradigm. Like German, Yiddish is subject to a rule which moves the verb to the second position of the clause, as shown in (2a). This example contains a separable-prefix verb **avekshikn**, which makes the movement readily apparent. The inflected part of the verb, **shikt**, has moved to the second position, leaving behind the prefix **avek**, as indicated by the arrow. Example (2b), however, shows that Yiddish differs from German in that this verb movement also occurs in embedded clauses. Again, the separation of the inflected part of the verb and the prefix indicates that movement has taken place.

- (2) a. Max **shikt** avek dos bukh. (inf.=avekshikn)  
Max sends away the book
- b. Khayim gloybt az Max **shikt** avek dos bukh.  
Chaim believes that Max sends away the book

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The fact that verb-second occurs in embedded clauses with complementizers indicates that the complementizer position and the verb-second position cannot be one and the same in Yiddish. More specifically, since verb-second can co-occur with the complementizer *az*, verb-second in Yiddish does **not** involve verb movement to Comp. The question that remains is: Where does the verb move?

I suggest that in Yiddish, rather than moving to Comp, the inflected verb moves instead to Infl, which is in the second position. This movement of the verb is a case of head movement, as described by Travis (1984). Having Infl as the landing site for the verb allows verb-second to co-occur with a complementizer, as in (2b).

Before giving a detailed presentation of this theory of verb-second in Yiddish, I have a second observation about Yiddish word order. Topicalization (meaning fronting of either subjects or non-subjects to the preverbal position) occurs in both main and embedded clauses. This is illustrated by the examples in (3). We see that in (3a) the preverbal position is occupied by the adverb **haynt** ("today"). The subject NP **Max**, on the other hand, immediately follows the inflected verb **hot**. Since I am regarding the inflected verb as being in the Infl position, this order indicates that the adverb must be moving to the [Spec,IP] (I am assuming throughout a version of X-bar theory based on that in (Chomsky 1986)).

In the embedded clause shown in (3b), the same situation holds. The preverbal position is filled by the adverb (which is to the right of the complementizer), and the subject follows the inflected verb.

- (3) a. **Haynt** hot Max gekoyft dos bukh.  
           today has Max bought the book
- b. Khayim gloybt az **haynt** hot Max gekoyft  
           Chaim believes that today has Max bought  
           dos bukh  
           the book

Putting the examples in (2) and (3) together, I come to the conclusion that the [Spec,IP] in Yiddish is

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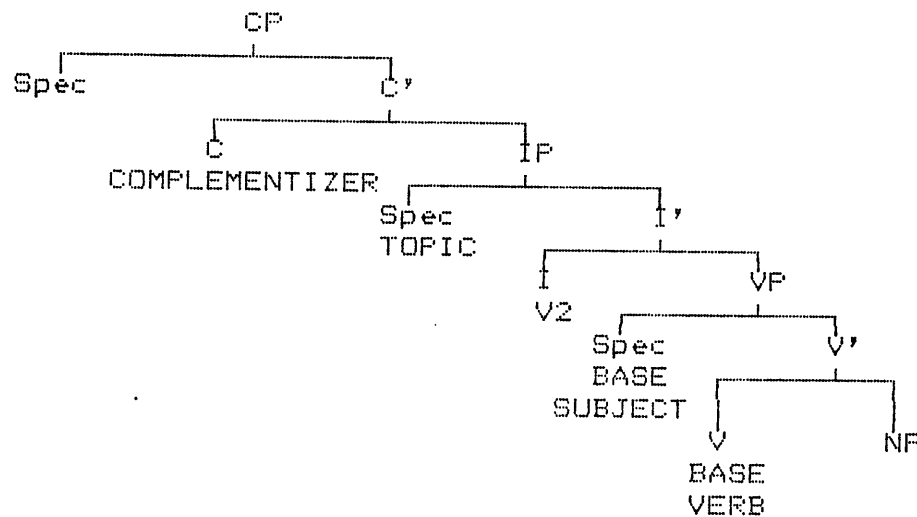
a **topic** position, unlike English, where the [Spec,IP] is the **subject** position. Since the [Spec,IP] in Yiddish is not the subject position, subjects have to be base-generated somewhere else. I suggest that subjects are generated inside the VP.

So far the Yiddish data have led to the following conclusions:

1. Verb second is a result of verb movement to I rather than to Comp.
2. The [Spec,IP] is functioning as a topic position ([Spec,IP] is not the base subject position). Subjects are base-generated inside VP.

The tree in (4) clearly illustrates the relationships between all these positions.

(4) Proposed structure of Yiddish:



The SVO orders of the examples in (2) are derived by raising the subject from the [Spec,VP] to the [Spec,IP]. (This is along the lines of the analyses proposed by Kitagawa (1987), Sportiche (1986), Kuroda (1985), and Fukui (1986).) The verb moves from its base position in the VP to the verb-second position I.

In the case of non-subject topicalization, such as in (3), the topicalized constituent (in this case the adverb) is raised to [Spec,IP], and the subject remains in its base position inside the VP. In this case, movement of the verb to I results in the subject being immediately to the right of the inflected verb,

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as in (3a) and (3b).

As we have seen, Yiddish is unlike English in that things other than the subject can appear in the [Spec,IP] position. In order to see what this involves, I will briefly compare my analysis of Yiddish to an analysis of English which also posits VP-internal subjects, such as that proposed in Kitagawa (1987).

In Kitagawa's analysis of English, only the subject can be raised to [Spec,IP]. This restriction follows automatically if the [Spec,IP] is an A-position. The reason for this is that A-movement is constrained by the Binding Theory. If, in English, a **non-subject** were to be raised to [Spec,IP] by A-movement, an anaphoric trace would be left unbound in its governing category, because the governing category in this case would be the VP, due to the presence of the unmoved VP-internal subject. Thus, raising of a non-subject in English is ruled out by Principle A of the Binding Theory. This result is comparable to Binding Theory effects in NPs.

This leads to the following question for Yiddish: is [Spec,IP] in Yiddish functioning as an A-position or an A-bar position? Since we have already seen that Yiddish clearly has the possibility of raising non-subjects to the [Spec,IP] position, I claim that the [Spec,IP] in Yiddish has the option of functioning as an A-bar position. This will allow non-subjects to be fronted (such as the adverb in (3)), since A-bar movement is **not** subject to Principle A of the Binding Theory. This enables the adverb **haynt** in (3) to be raised to the preverbal position.

### 3. Distribution of Preverbal Pronouns

In the previous section I gave evidence that the [Spec,IP] in Yiddish has the option of functioning as an A-bar-position. This leaves two possible states of affairs:

1. [Spec,IP] is always an A-bar-position.
2. [Spec,IP] is optionally an A-bar-position.

In this section I will present evidence that the second possibility is the correct one. Permitting the [Spec,IP] in Yiddish to function as an A-bar position as well as an A-position accounts directly for some pronoun distribution facts that were noted by Travis (1984). These facts concern the possibility of moving

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pronouns to the preverbal position. Example (5) shows that subject pronouns can be fronted without restriction. This contrasts with (6), in which an object pronoun is fronted. Here the sentence is ungrammatical unless the pronoun *im* is given some kind of pitch accent. Finally, in the case of the pronoun *es*, which cannot bear stress, fronting a non-subject is always ungrammatical, as shown by (7).

(5) *Es* hot gegesn dos broyt.  
it has eaten the bread

(6)\**Im* hobn di kinder gezen. (without stress)  
him have the children seen

(7)\**Es* hobn di kinder gezen. (*es* cannot bear stress)  
it have the children seen. stress)  
(examples from Travis 1984)

Travis makes the following generalization which appears to follow from these observations:

Non-subject pronouns can only appear preverbally if they are stressed.

These facts follow neatly from the analysis I have outlined in which [Spec,IP] can be either an A-position or an A-bar-position. The necessary distinction between subject and non-subject fronting is automatically made by the dual nature of the [Spec,IP]. A-bar movement, which is characteristic of operator positions, gives a topic interpretation which is unavailable for unstressed pronouns. Subject pronouns, on the other hand, are raised by A-movement, and therefore are not given this special topic interpretation. Therefore, fronted subject pronouns do not require stress. Thus, we can restate Travis' generalization as follows:

Pronouns can only be raised to [Spec,IP] via A-bar movement.

Thus we see that allowing both A and A-bar movement to [Spec,IP] gives the distinction between subject and non-subject pronouns for free, since only non-subject pronouns can be fronted by A-movement.

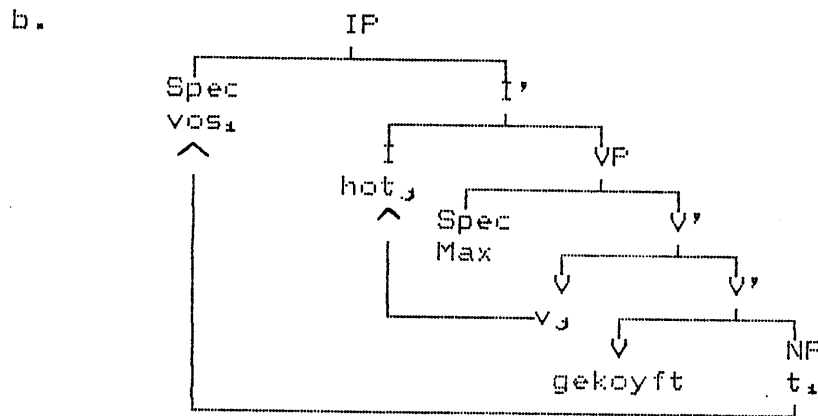
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4. Wh-Asymmetry

The dual function of the [Spec,IP] also explains an asymmetry between verb-second in matrix questions and embedded questions. In this discussion I will be assuming that embedded questions select for an abstract **Q-morpheme** in Comp, which is not found in matrix questions.

I will first consider direct questions. Example (8a) shows that in matrix questions the WH-word *vos* appears immediately to the left of the verb-second position. Since I am proposing that the inflected verb has moved to I, this position of the WH-word relative to the verb leads to the conclusion that the WH-word has moved to the [Spec,IP] position, as illustrated in the tree in (8b).

(8)a. Vos hot Max gekoyft?  
what has Max bought



The WH-word does not need to move any further to an A-bar position, since the [Spec,IP] in Yiddish can function as an A-bar position. Thus, the WH-word "counts" as a first element for verb-second in matrix questions.

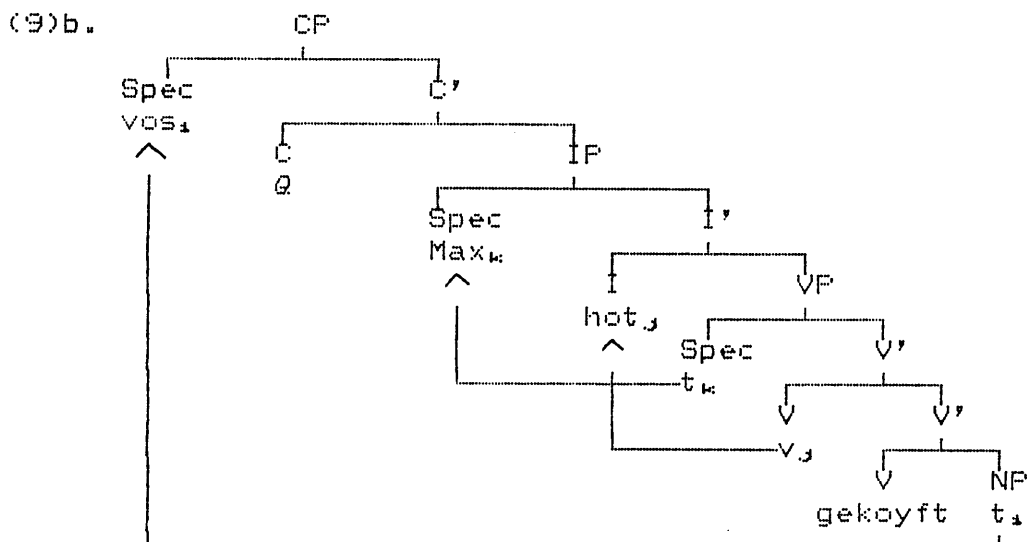
This contrasts with the word order in indirect questions. Example (9a) shows that in indirect questions the WH-word *vos* is not adjacent to the verb-second position, and therefore does not count as a "first element" with respect to verb-second. To account for this we must first recall that in indirect



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questions the CP node (with the Q-morpheme) is selected for, as shown in the tree in (9b).

- (9)a. Ikh veys nit vos Max hot gekoyft.  
I know not what Max has bought



The tree illustrates that in indirect questions the WH-word moves to [Spec,CP] rather than to the [Spec,IP]. The [Spec,IP], on the other hand, is filled by the "topicalized" element, which in this case is **Max**. Since the inflected verb has moved to verb-second position (Infl), the end result is that the WH-word will not count for verb-second in indirect questions. The verb can't move from the Infl position to the Comp position which is adjacent to the WH-word because the Q-morpheme occupies the head of Comp and blocks movement to C.

Further support for WH-movement to [Spec,CP] in indirect questions is given by the examples in (10). In particular, (10a) shows an example of an indirect question co-occurring with a topicalized adverb *frier* ("earlier") in the [Spec,IP] position.<sup>1</sup> This indicates that in indirect questions the topic position and the WH-position are distinct. The ungrammatical sentence in (10b), on the other hand, shows that in matrix clauses, WH-extraction cannot co-occur with topicalization, leading to the conclusion that WH-movement and topic-movement have the same landing site in matrix clauses.

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- (10)a. Zi iz gekumen zen ver frier vet kontshen.  
 she is come see who earlier will finish  
 "She has come to see who earlier will finish."  
 (from P. Hirshbein, Grine Felder, ca. 1915)
- b.\* Ver frier vet kontshen?  
 who earlier will finish

In summary, there is an asymmetry of word order between matrix and embedded questions in Yiddish. My analysis accounts for the difference in the relative position of the WH-word with respect to the inflected verb by allowing the [Spec,IP] to function as an A-bar position. Thus, the [Spec,IP] functions as a landing site for Wh-movement in main clauses. This is possible because [Spec,IP] can function as an A-bar position in Yiddish. This is reflected in the word order by the fact that the WH-word in matrix clauses counts as a first element with respect to verb-second. In embedded clauses, on the other hand, the WH-word moves to [Spec,CP]. This is due to the fact that embedded questions select for a Q-morpheme in Comp. This results in the fact that the WH-word is not adjacent to the verb-second position.

### 5. ECP Effects

In this section I will discuss two phenomena in which the ECP interacts with WH-movement in both indirect and direct questions in Yiddish. The interactions provide additional empirical evidence for the presence of the abstract Q-morpheme, and also shed light on the extent and nature of verb movement in Yiddish.

#### 5.1 Es-insertion in embedded questions

Indirect questions in Yiddish show an apparent subject/object asymmetry which is not seen in matrix questions. I will show that although this asymmetry is indeed an ECP effect, it is not strictly a complement/non-complement contrast. Rather, it turns out to be a result of an ungoverned [Spec,IP] position. This ECP effect appears regardless of whether [Spec,IP] is functioning as an A-position or an A-bar-position.

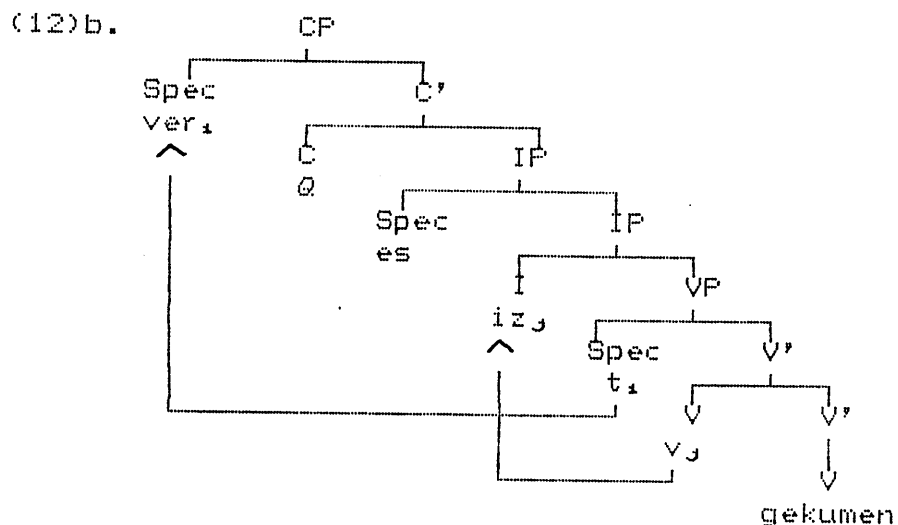
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As the examples (11) and (12) show, if no element is topicalized (moved to the [Spec,IP] position) in an embedded question, the pronoun *es* must appear preverbally. In example (11), the subject *Max* has been fronted to the preverbal position, so no *es* appears.

- (11) Ikh veys nit vos Max hot gekoyft.  
I know not what Max has bought

But in the case of an extraction where no element has been topicalized, as in example (12), the pronoun *es* must appear in the preverbal position. The tree in (12b) shows that the subject has been extracted from its base position inside the VP, and no other element has been fronted to [Spec,IP]. It is under these conditions that the *es* must appear preverbally.

- (12)a. Ikh veys nit ver \*(es) iz gekumen.  
I know not who ES is come  
"I don't know who has come."



This effect is most apparent with subject extractions, since most non-subject extractions take the form of (11). But, there are some cases of non-subject extraction in which nothing (including the subject) has been moved to [Spec,IP]. Example (13) is an illustration of this case. Although the extracted element *vemen* is not the subject, no topic has been raised to the [Spec,IP], and therefore the *es* must

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appear preverbally.

- (13) un eyn grupe hot nisht keyn anung vemen \*(es)  
 and one group has not no idea whom ES
- zaynen onfartroyt gevorn di andere funktsies  
 are entrusted (passive) the other functions  
 "and one group has no idea in whom are entrusted  
 the other functions"  
 (from the Yiddish newspaper Forverts 3/29/85)

Additionally, if the subject extraction co-occurs with topicalization as in (10a) (repeated here), the *es* does not appear, as the [Spec,IP] is filled by the topicalized element.

- (10)a. Zi iz gekumen zen ver frier vet kontshen.  
 she is come see who earlier will finish  
 "She has come to see who earlier will finish."  
 (from P. Hirshbein, Grine Felder, ca. 1915)

b'.\*Zi iz gekumen zen ver frier es vet kontshen.

This leads to the conclusion that [Spec,IP] must be filled in embedded questions. If the [Spec,IP] were to remain empty, the sentence would be ruled out by the ECP. This can be seen in (12b). The Q-morpheme in C blocks the verb *iz* in (12b) from moving to C and lexically governing the [Spec,IP]. The Q-morpheme also blocks the possibility of the WH-word moving up to the [Spec,CP] via the [Spec,IP], and thereby antecedent governing the [Spec,IP]. Thus, the presence of the Q-morpheme accounts for the fact that the [Spec,IP] must be filled in embedded questions, which in turn accounts for the obligatory presence of the preverbal *es* in the absence of another topicalized element.<sup>2</sup>

In summary, the word order facts I have described so far follow from the the following assumptions about Yiddish:

1. Verb-second arises as a result of verb movement to Infl, NOT verb movement to Comp, as in German.
2. [Spec,IP] has a dual nature-- it can function either as an A-position or an A-bar position. This analysis runs contrary to the position taken by Travis (1984). Travis argues for two derivations of verb second. In SVO orders, verb-second results from

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verb movement to a sentence-medial Infl position. In non-SVO orders in Yiddish (where non-subject topicalization has taken place), verb-second is a result of verb movement to Comp, regardless of whether or not a lexical complementizer is present. Thus, in Travis' view, Yiddish differs from German in that verb movement to Comp can co-occur with the presence of a complementizer.

While Travis' analysis could perhaps be adapted to account for the data I have discussed so far, in the next section I will describe a second case of verb movement in Yiddish, which is in fact verb movement to Comp. I will show that (contra Travis) verb movement to Comp in Yiddish actually exhibits the same asymmetry as German: Yiddish verb movement to Comp only takes place in the absence of a complementizer.

5.2 Stylistic Inversion

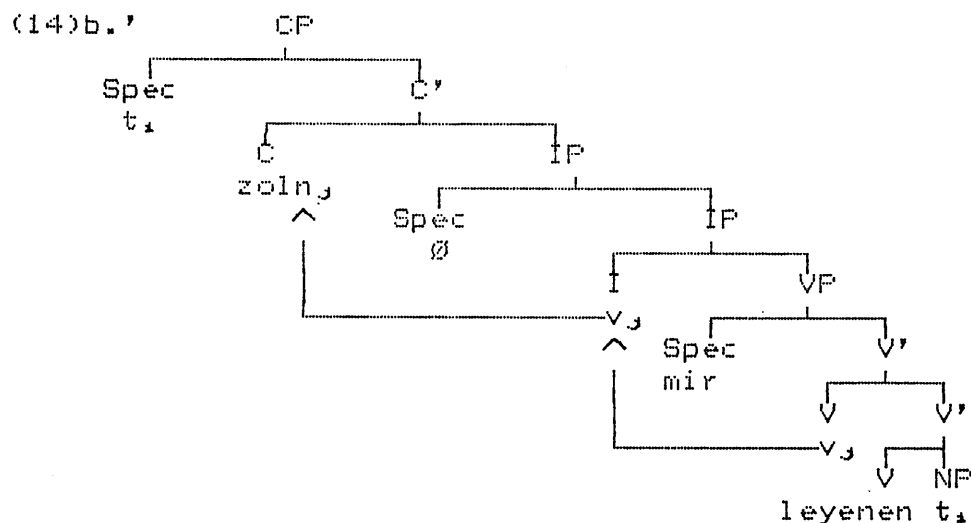
In extractions from embedded declaratives, the presence or absence of a lexical complementizer has a striking effect on word order. Where no lexical complementizer is present, the verb can move up to Comp, resulting in "Stylistic Inversion" of the verb and subject.<sup>9</sup> This is seen clearly in the case of object extraction, as in (14).

- (14)a. Vos hot er nit gevolt az mir zoln leyenen?  
 what has he not wanted that we should read  
 "What has he not wanted us to read?"
- b. Vos hot er nit gevolt zoln mir leyenen?  
 what has he not wanted should we read
- c.\*Vos hot er nit gevolt mir zoln leyenen?  
 what has he not wanted we should read
- d.\*Vos hot er nit gevolt az zoln mir leyenen?  
 what has he not wanted that should we read

The contrast between (14a) and (14b) illustrates the complementarity between the appearance of the complementizer and the occurrence of the inversion of the subject and inflected verb. In (14a), Comp is filled by the complementizer *az*, so the verb is unable to move from Infl, and there is no inversion. In (14b), there is no complementizer, and the verb *zoln* has moved

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to Comp, resulting in an inversion. The tree in (14b') shows how the verb moves first to Infl, and then to Comp so that the verb and the subject are inverted.



I will be assuming that head-to-head movement of the verb is subject to the Government Transparency Corollary of Baker (1985):

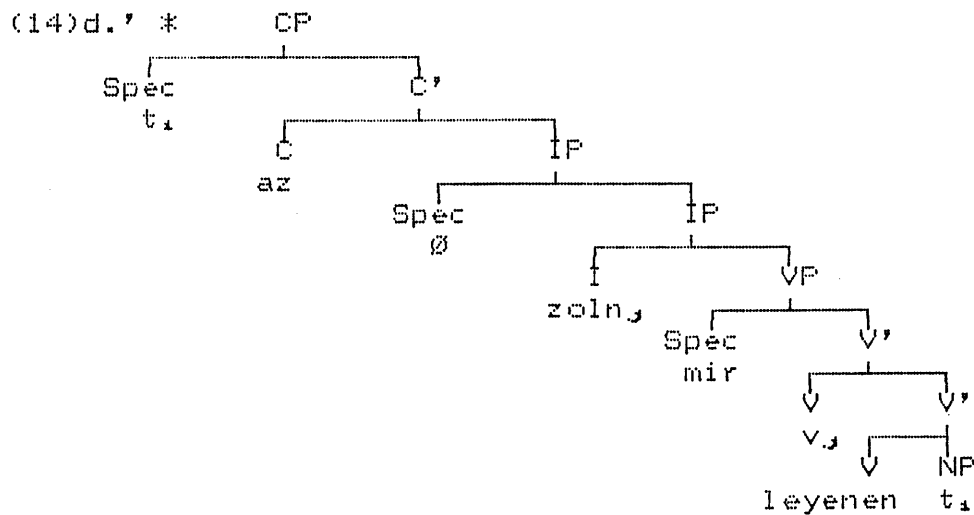
- (15) Government Transparency Corollary (Baker 1985)  
 A lexical category which has an item incorporated into it governs everything which the incorporated item governed in its original position.

In this configuration the inflected verb **zoin** will thereby lexically govern the empty [Spec,IP]. Thus, the verb is able to move to Comp due to the absence of the complementizer. The verb must move to Comp to govern the empty [Spec,IP].

Example (14c) shows that this movement of the verb is obligatory in the absence of the complementizer. The Comp position in (14c) is empty and ungoverned. Thus, in addition to government of an empty [Spec,IP], verb movement to Comp is also triggered by the requirement that Comp be filled, and (14c) is also ruled out by the ECP. Finally, (14d) shows that there is no inversion when the complementizer is present. The verb cannot move to Comp when Comp is filled by a complementizer. The tree in (14d') shows the only possible structure for this sentence. The verb is blocked from moving to Comp by the complementizer, so the only way an inversion could result is if the

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subject stayed inside the VP, which would result in an ungoverned empty [Spec,IP]



Similar effects are seen with subject extractions; in the absence of a complementizer, the inflected verb moves to Comp. The inversion of verb and subject is not visible however, since the subject is trace. This can be seen in (16a). There is no complementizer, so the verb moves to Comp.

- (16)a. Ver hot er moyre vet kumen?  
 who has he fear will come  
 "Who is he afraid will come?"

But (16b) shows the case in which the complementizer is present. Here there is an apparent Comp-trace effect. Since the trace in the base subject position within the VP will be lexically governed by the inflected verb, the ungrammaticality must be a result of an ungoverned [Spec,IP].

- (16)b.\*Ver hot er moyre az vet kumen?  
 who has he fear that will come

This analysis is further supported by (16c), which shows that the ECP violation can be marginally "saved" by the presence of a dummy *es* in the [Spec,IP].

- (16)c.?Ver hot er moyre az es vet kumen?  
 who has he fear that ES will come

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The complementizer can also co-occur with a subject extraction in the case where a non-subject has been fronted to the [Spec,IP], as in (16d). Here an adverb (*haynt*) has been fronted to fill [Spec,IP], so no ECP violation will occur.

(16)d. Ver hot er moyre az **haynt** vet kumen?  
 who has he fear that today will come

(16d) is grammatical, even though there is the complementizer *az* along with the subject extraction. Thus, it is quite clear that it is not an ungoverned subject trace that leads to the Comp-trace effect in (16b), rather it is the empty [Spec,IP]. When [Spec,IP] is lexically filled, as in (16c-d), no violation occurs.

In summary, in direct questions from embedded clauses (where there is a WH-trace in [Spec,CP]), both the head of CP and the [Spec,IP] are subject to the ECP. Government of the [Spec,IP] can be accomplished by either a lexical filler, or by lexical government by an inflected verb which has moved to Comp. It is this second possibility which gives rise to the second case of verb movement in Yiddish-- from Infl to Comp. This verb movement is triggered by the absence of a complementizer, and thus shows the same distribution of verb movement to Comp as is seen in German. Where no complementizer is present verb movement to Comp must occur. When a complementizer is present, verb movement to Comp cannot occur.

## 6. Final Summary

In this paper I argued that verb-second in Yiddish is a result of verb movement to Infl, rather than verb movement to Comp, as in German. I also argued that the [Spec,IP] in Yiddish has a dual nature, in that it can function as either an A-position or an A-bar-position. This allows [Spec,IP] to act as a landing site for WH-movement and topicalization as well as subject fronting. Consequently, verb-second and topicalization occur in both main and embedded clauses in Yiddish.

In addition, under "Stylistic Inversion" conditions a second type of verb movement can occur. This verb movement is in fact verb movement to Comp. Interestingly, verb movement to Comp in Yiddish



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patterns like verb movement to Comp in German in that it is obligatory in the absence of a complementizer and blocked in the presence of a complementizer.

NOTES

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1. I should at this point note that my data for this type of construction in which topicalization occurs in an embedded question does not agree with the data that has been given by Lowenstamm (1977) and others. This probably due to dialect variation, since this example is from written Yiddish and its grammaticality is supported by my informants' intuitions.

2. Travis (1984) gives an analysis of *es*-insertion in embedded questions in terms of a subject/object asymmetry. She does not, however, allow for the existence of sentences such as (13) and (10a).

3. This is comparable to "Stylistic Inversion" in French and Spanish (Kayne and Pollock 1978; Torrego 1984).

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