V2

# German

## German is the classical V2 language

### the finite verb occupies the second position in main clauses

### the first position can be occupied by

#### the subject

##### Sie geht heute einkaufen she goes today shopping

#### the topic

##### heute geht  Sie  einkaufen today, she goes shopping

##### es zeige Ich dir it show I you(dat) “it, I will show to you”

##### dir zeige Ich es you(dat) show I it “to you, I will show it”

#### a wh-element

##### Wann geht Ihr Kind schlafen when goes your child to sleep

### the finite verb can be a main verb or an auxiliary

#### when there is an auxiliary, the main verb (non-finite) is last

##### Der Mann hat den Hund gebissen the man has the dog bitten

### in finite subordinate clauses with a complementiser the finite verb is last

#### [Er sagte dass er sehr müde](javascript:void(0)) sei he said that he very tired was

#### \* [Er sagte dass er sei sehr müde](javascript:void(0))

### without the complementiser the verb can be in second position

#### [Er sagte er sei sehr müde](javascript:void(0)) he said he was very tired

# English

## Old English used to be similar to German – though not exactly the same

### generally subject pronouns came in front of the finite verb, making a V3 pattern

## Modern English is not considered to be a V2 language – but it does show some vestiges of V2

### the subject precedes the finite verb

#### but this is not typically considered to be because of the V2 requirement

##### other things can precede the finite verb, without causing any change to the subject’s position

###### he sometimes feels angry

###### \* sometimes feels he angry

### topicalisation does not trigger V2

#### Peter, I don’t trust

#### \* Peter don’t I trust

### wh-fronting triggers inversion in main clauses, which seems similar to V2 – the finite verb is in second position

#### when will you pay the bills

#### \* when you will pay the bills

### we also get inversion in a number of other cases involving the fronting of some element (so similar to V2)

#### nowhere could he stay (negative fronting)

#### so accurate was his typing ... (adjectival fronting with ‘so’)

#### in the post arrived a letter (locative inversion)

#### “I don’t know” said John

#### Clark Kent is superman – superman is Clark Kent

#### (he can play the piano) as can I (fronting with VP ellipsis)

##### in this last case, it is difficult to know whether this is a true case of inversion as we can’t see the position of the VP

# Standard analysis

## inversion is generally taken to be a movement to the complementiser position

### in German

#### the first position is the specifier of the CP and so the second position is the C

#### the specifier position is open for various elements

##### subject (?)

##### topic

##### wh-element

#### evidence for 1st position = spec CP

##### German topics, unlike English, are restricted to one per clause

###### \* dir es zeige Ich to you this I show

###### in this company, that man, we don’t trust

#### evidence for V2 position = C

##### the complementary distribution between V2 and overt complementisers is the usual argument

### in English

#### the complementary distribution between inverted auxiliaries and complementisers is usually quoted as evidence for movement to C

#### the fact that complementisers are subcategorised for force is another reason to think that inversion and wh-fronting make use of positions in CP

#### Topicalisation in English is either analysed as adjunction or movement to specifier of TopP

##### neither of these address the issue of how come there are such differences in language – why CP is the landing site for topicalisation in some languages

# Problems for standard analyses

## second position phenomena is common in a range of languages (Wakernagle phenomena)

### in many languages the second position is defined with respect to the first WORD or ‘phrase’

#### clearly this does not sit well with second position phenomena being analysed as requirements that elements sit in the specifier an head positions of a given phrase

## specifiers are not always adjacent to their heads

### in the IP we can get adverbials between the subject and the inflection

#### therefore it does not fall out straightforwardly from the analysis that the finite element will always be in second position

## why the CP should be the locus of V2 is rarely discussed

### while inversion into CP makes some sense, it does not make much sense that CP be the place that topics, subject, etc. should move to

### it is not clear why, even if there is a reason for topics being in CP specifier, the verb should have to move to C

#### this is especially so given that if the C position is filled, the verb does not have to undergo the movement

## that the CP is not the locus of all second position phenomena is indicated by the fact that the presence of a complementiser does not prevent all inversion:

### I said that never would I see him again

### I think that in the post arrived a letter

### I think that Superman is Clark Kent

#### it isn’t obvious in all these cases which specifier and head position are used if we want to maintain this kind of analysis for inversion phenomena

## not all second position phenomena involve the front of the clause

### there are a number of second to last phenomena which could only be analysed in a spec-head system if they involved specifier last structures

#### direct evidence for specifier last structures is not entirely convincing

#### English shows some second to last phenomena, and this is otherwise uniformly specifier first

## heads are not always adjacent to specifiers

### spec comp H and H comp spec are possible arrangements

#### therefore the spec-head account of second position phenomena is also reliant on other assumptions