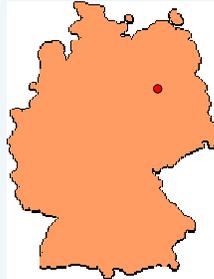


1. Object language

German (*Deutsch*) is a West Germanic language spoken by about 100 m speakers as their native language. It is mainly spoken in Central Europe but there are linguistic enclaves all over Europe (especially in Italy) but also in the USA (Pennsylvania Dutch). German is an official language in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg, and Belgium.



Data collection with the D2-Questionnaire took place in Potsdam. The informants that participated were students at the University of Potsdam, mostly coming from the general area of Berlin-Brandenburg but not exclusively.

3. Empirical observations

3.1 Prosody

As reported in the literature (Féry 1993), we observe a falling H*L tone on focused constituents in German. Our data however suggests further that contrastive focus may have a different prosodic realization from new information focus.

Both types of focus show a falling tonal pattern, but the alignment of the tonal target to the stressed syllable differs:

- under new information focus, the high pitch is realized on the stressed syllable and the fall on following syllable(s) (see Figure 1).
- under contrastive focus the high pitch and the fall occur already on the stressed syllable (see Figure 2) (cf. Steube 2003).

The difference may be due to separate phrasing of the contrastively focussed constituent with a following L- boundary tone, as suggested in GToBi, or due to a distinct HL* tone for contrastive focus. Further research is needed to determine which of these is the correct explanation.

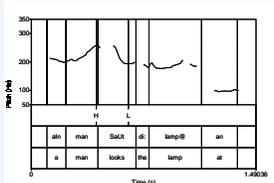


Figure 1 New information focus

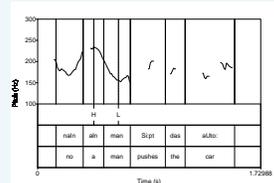


Figure 2 Contrastive focus

Given material tends to be deaccented (Féry 1993). We examined the influence of the given-new distinction on the incidence of deaccentuation in our elicited data, comparing agent-new/patient-given vs. agent-given/patient-new pairs. Our data indicates an asymmetry depending on the sentence position of the given item:

- when the order is new-given the given material is deaccented
- when the order is given-new the given material is not deaccented although pre-nuclear de-accenting is possible in German (see Figure 3)

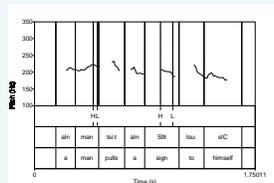


Figure 3 Non-deaccenting of [Silt] 'silt' in a context when it is given.

4. References

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2. Information Structure

German is an inflectional language with case-marking on the noun and agreement-marking on the verb. German exhibits a second position constraint on finite verbs in main clauses, whilst in embedded clauses finite verbs appear in clause-final position.

Syntactic phenomena of interest for the study of IS in German include:

- generally, the connection between free word order (scrambling) and discourse (Fanselow 2001, Grewendorf 2005, Reis 1993)
- the fine structure of the traditionally called *Vorfeld*-position (SpecCP) with several discourse-related phrases like FocP and TopP (Frey 2005)
- discourse-related positions in non-peripheral domains of the clause (Frey, 2004)

From a phonological point of view, research has primarily centred on the role of prosody in conveying pragmatically relevant information, including:

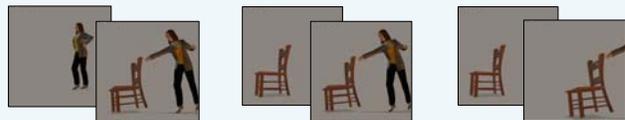
- generally, the interplay between syntax and phonology/intonation (Fanselow 2004, Ishihara 2003, Truckenbrodt 1995)
- the number of pitch-accent and contours, and conditions on their use (Kügler & Féry 2006, Féry 1993, Féry 1998, Grice et al. 2004)
- second occurrence focus (Féry & Ishihara 2005)

3.2 Passivization and the discourse status of the agent

In a study of the treatment of referring expressions, Gundel et al. (1993:275) established a *givenness hierarchy* that contains six discourse statuses of referents. A sub-part of this hierarchy is elicited in VISIBILITY:

current centre of attention < new/uniquely identified < new/type identifiable

Figure 4 Picture pairs from the elicitation task VISIBILITY (elicits pairs of descriptions)



(a) agent=given (b) agent=new (uniquely identified) (c) agent=new (type identifiable)

The results show that the givenness hierarchy not only determines the type of referring expression used but also the choice of syntactic construction:

- when the agent is *given* speakers produce sentences with *agent subjects* (active verbs) (see (a) in Figure 4 and example (1) below)
- when the agent is *new* speakers produce sentences with *patient subjects* (passive verbs) (see (b)-(c) in Figure 4 and examples (2)-(3) correspondingly)

- (1) *Eine Frau steht da. Jetzt schlägt sie einen Stuhl.*
'A woman stands there. Now she hits a chair.'
- (2) *'s steht ein Stuhl im Zimmer und dieser wird von einer Frau umgestoßen.*
'There stands a chair in the room and this is pushed by a woman.'
- (3) *Ich sehe einen Stuhl. Der Stuhl wird von jemandem gestoßen.*
'I see a chair. The chair is pushed by somebody.'

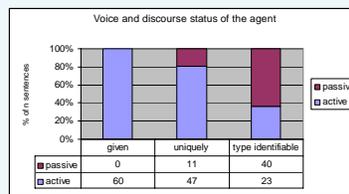


Figure 5 Results from 32 German speakers in the experiment VISIBILITY

In condition (c), when the agent is *type identifiable* only, passive sentences occur more frequently (the agent is often not realised at all in this condition).