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Comparative Topology

The fields analysis of sentence structure in the Danish and Dutch linguistic traditions

Linda Zwezerijnen & Jan-Wouter Zwart
University of Groningen

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The fields analysis

VORFELD

{

MITTELFELD

}

NACHFELD

Waarschijnlijk heeft Jan Marie gisteren niet verteld
probably AUX John Mary yesterday NEG tell:PERF
'John probably didn't tell Mary yesterday what he was thinking.'

wat hij dacht
what he thought

- fields separated by **Satzklammer** (sentence brackets)
- fields defined by (potential) verb positions
- English: initial field, middle field, final field



The origin (1937)

Drach, *Grundgedanken der deutschen Satzlehre*, Frankfurt 1937:17

<i>Der Mann</i> Vorfeld	<i>liest</i> Mittelfeld	<i>ein Buch</i> Nachfeld
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- Middle field = finite verb (*Geschehen*, event)
- Initial field = starting point, final field = end point (transitivity)
- Not applied to the embedded clause (where the verb is in final position)



Redefining the middle field (1954)

“Gruppierung in ‘Vor-, Mittel- oder Nachfeld’ **des Verbs**”

(Johannes Erben, *Grundzüge einer Syntax der Sprache Luthers*, Berlin 1954:13)

“Die Termini ‘Vor- und Nachfeld’ sind von Drach [1937] übernommen und durch ‘Mittelfeld’ (das von den Gliedern der verbalen Kerngruppe, etwa Verb+Hilfsverb, umrahmte Satzstück) ergänzt worden”

(ibid.)

a grouping in terms of the verb’s initial, middle and final field

the terms ‘initial/final field’ have been adopted from Drach 1937
and have been supplemented with ‘middle field’
(the part framed by the members of the verbal core, say Aux+V)



The Herling/Erdmann system (cf. Höhle 1986)

- asymmetry among verbal positions (Herling 1821, Becker 1829, Erdmann 1886)
 - right bracket: basic verbal position (verbal complex, infinitives)
 - left bracket: finiteness position (not a verbal position)
- initial field not defined in terms of Grammatical Function (i.e. \neq subject position)
- system combined with the Drach/Erben field-terminology by Griesbach (1960; ‘Satzfeld’ instead of ‘Mittelfeld’) and Engel (1970)
- ultimately: verbs function as separators between fields

1821, Herling: Über die Topik der deutschen Sprache. In *Abhandlungen des frankfurtschen Gelehrtenvereins für deutsche Sprache* 3, 296-362.

1829, Becker: *Deutsche Grammatik*. Frankfurt.

1886, Erdmann: *Grundzüge der deutschen Syntax nach ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung dargestellt*. Stuttgart.

1960, Griesbach: Neue Grundlagen für den fortgeschrittenen Deutschunterricht I. In *Deutschunterricht für Ausländer* 10, 97-109.

1970, Engel: Regeln zur Wortstellung. In *Forschungsberichte des Instituts für deutsche Sprache* 5, 7-148.

1986, Höhle: Der Begriff ‘Mittelfeld’: Anmerkungen über die Theorie der topologischen Felder. In *Akten des VII. Internationalen Germanisten-Kongresses (Göttingen 1985)*, Band 3, 329-340. Tübingen.



This paper

- Implementation of the topological fields analysis in various linguistic traditions
 - Danish: *sætningsskema*
(Paul Diderichsen, 1946, *Elementær dansk Grammatik*. Copenhagen.)
 - Dutch: *groepenschema*
(Piet Paardekooper, 1955, *Syntactische verkenningen*. Den Bosch.)
- Comparison with the German system(s)



Sætningsskema (Diderichsen 1946)

foundation field	nexus field			content field		
<i>preverbal subject, 'topic'</i>	<i>finite V</i>	<i>postverbal subject</i>	<i>nexus adverbs</i>	<i>nonfinite verbs</i>	<i>object</i>	<i>content adverbs</i>
Jeg <i>I</i>	har <i>have</i>	--	ikke <i>not</i>	set <i>seen</i>	ham <i>him</i>	siden jul <i>since X-mas</i>
Ham <i>him</i>	har	jeg <i>I</i>	ikke	set	--	siden jul



Definitions

<i>foundation field</i>	<i>nexus field</i>	<i>content field</i>
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- foundation field (*fundamentfelt*)
 - if present: the first constituent
- nexus field (*neksusfelt*)
 - **always: the finite verb**
 - if present: adverbs affecting the clausal polarity
 - if foundation field does not contain a subject: the subject
- content field (*inholdsfelt*)
 - if present: nonfinite verbs
 - if present: object(s) [Danish = SVO]
 - if present: remaining adverbs



Embedded Clauses

- word order = Comp—Subj—Adv/Neg—Vf—Vinf—Obj—Adv
- no foundation field (no topicalization in embedded clauses)
- nexus field reshuffled

nexus field (embedded clause)		
<i>subject</i>	<i>sentence adverbs</i>	<i>finite verb</i>
Bo	ikke <i>not</i>	plejede <i>was in the habit</i>

... at Bo ikke plejede at komme
that Bo not used to come

- complementizer occupies 'linking field'



Comparison with Drach 1937

- key position of the finite verb
 - Drach: finite verb = Mittelfeld
 - Diderichsen: finite verb defines nexus field
- Vorfeld = foundation field
Mittelfeld = nexus field
Nachfeld = content field
- different treatment of inversion by Diderichsen
 - postverbal subject included in nexus field (instead of in Nachfeld)
 - definition of nexus field stretched
- field analysis generalized by Diderichsen
 - both main & embedded clauses
 - order of elements within nexus field construction dependent



Comparison with Herling/Erdmann system

- verbs do not function as clausal brackets (Satzklammer)
 - fields not defined as separated by verbal positions
 - Danish system closer to the original Drach system than to the later Herling/Erdmann system



Groepenschema (Paardekooper 1955)

initial group				middle group				final group	
Δ	<i>finite V</i>	<i>post- verbal subject</i>	<i>weak pronouns</i>	<i>indirect object</i>	<i>Adv</i>	<i>direct object</i>	<i>Adv</i>	<i>non- verbs</i>	<i>verbs</i>
Toch still	heeft has	Jan John	't it	Marie Mary	gisteren yesterday		niet not	terug back	gegeven given

- supplemented by (optional):
 - ‘start’ (*aanloop*): initial elements not triggering verb-second
 - ‘finish’ (*uitloop*): elements in extraposition (clauses, PPs)



Definitions

- initial group (*begingroep*)
 - centers around the verb-second position
 - members are adjacent to the verb in V2-position
(or to other members)
 - Δ = Diderichsen's foundation group (subject/topic)

- final group (*eindgroep*)
 - centers around the non-V2 verb position
 - members are (left-)adjacent to the verbs in non-V2 position
(or to other members)

- middle group (*middengroep*)
 - rest category



Embedded clauses

- Order = **Comp—Subj—Pron**—{Adv,Obj}—Preverbal—Verbs
- How to analyze the initial field?
 - Paardekooper 1955: unclear
 - Paardekooper 1987: Comp = V2-position, Δ often empty

initial field (embedded clause)			
Δ	Comp/FIN	Subj	pron
wat what	of (dat) if	ik I	'm him

.. wat (of (dat)) ik 'm moet geven
 what if that I him should give
 ‘..what I should give him’

Paardekooper 1987: *Beknopte ABN-syntaxis (7th ed.)*. Eindhoven.



Comparison with Drach 1937

- Finite verb moved out of the middle field
- Initial/final fields defined in terms of the verbs, not in terms of transitive semantics
- Initial field more complex
- Final field less complex
- No clear match between topologies



Comparison with Diderichsen 1946

- foundation field (Diderichsen) = Δ (part of the initial group) (Paardekooper)
- final group (Paardekooper) = reduced content field (Diderichsen)
 - only non-finite verbs
- nexus field (Diderichsen) and middle group (Paardekooper) are completely different concepts
- treatment of main/embedded clause asymmetry:
 - Diderichsen: internal reorganization of nexus field
 - Paardekooper: no major changes needed (assuming Comp = V2)



Comparison with Herling/Erdmann system

- Similar: the middle field as a rest category framed by verb positions
- Similar: asymmetry between verbal positions (finiteness-position vs. base-position)
 - Innovation: Comp = V2 = finiteness
- Difference: verbs included in initial/final fields (Paardekooper), not clausal brackets
 - Erben/Griesbach/Engel's final field (*Nachfeld*) = Paardekooper's finish (*uitloop*)



Conclusion

- The Danish topology is a direct descendant of the original Drach system
 - middle/nexus field defined in terms of the finite verb
 - initial/foundation field and final/content field defined relative to the finite verb
 - conceptual basis is the flow of a transitive event
- The Dutch topology is not a descendant of the Drach system
 - field division based on structuralist tests (adjacency)
 - Paardekooper was unaware of Drach 1937 (by personal communication)
- The topological implementation of the Herling/Erdmann system (i.e. fields defined relative to clausal brackets)
 - no relation to the Danish topology
 - quite close to the Dutch system, apparently by historical accident
- Conjecture: the convergence of the (later) German topology with Paardekooper's system facilitated a joint Dutch/German generative approach to clause structure