



Word order variants in the German Mittelfeld as pragmatic constructions: a corpus-based study

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Purpose of the talk

Show for a type of word order variation in German that

- word order variants can be described as **highly schematic constructions** with a **pragmatic** function
- these highly schematic constructions have to be characterized in **relation both to each other and to less schematic constructions** within the Constructicon

Overview

1. Introduction

- Word order variation in the *Mittelfeld*
- Specific type of variation

2. Corpus analysis

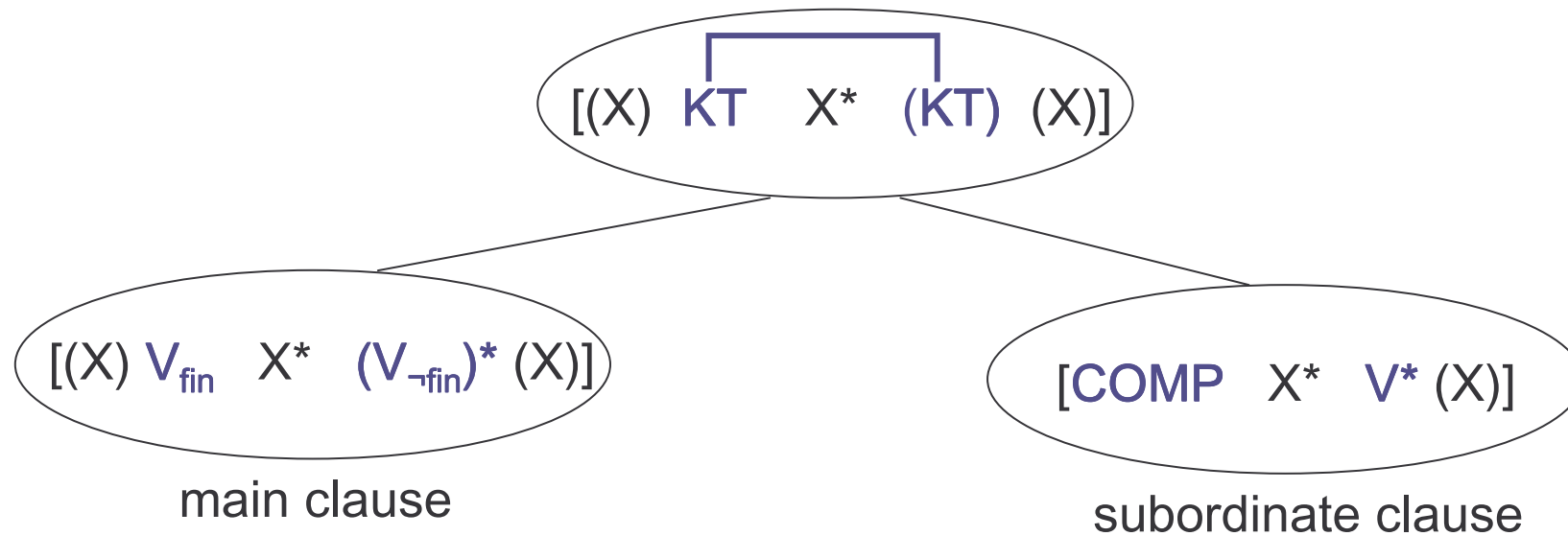
- Multivariate Analysis
- Pragmatic function: highlighting salient referents (in a set)
- Relation to less schematic constructions

3. Conclusions

- word order constructions in the Constructicon

4. Outlook: language change

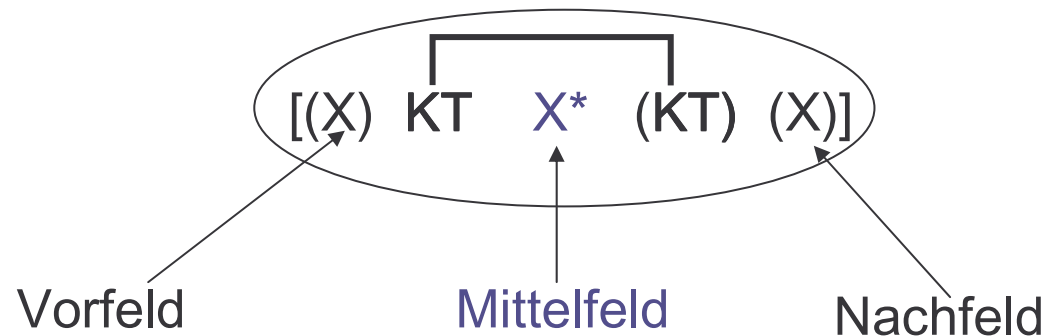
Introduction: Klammer-construction



Ich **habe** schlecht **geschlafen**, weil
 Er **kennt** jemand , der
Schläfst du auch fast ein ?

weil es zu viel Lärm **gab**
 der ihm **helfen will**, es zu tun

Introduction: Mittelfeld variation



Can contain multiple constituents
e.g. verbarguments, but not
always in the same order!

NP_{nom}	NP_{acc}	$><$	NP_{acc}	NP_{nom}
NP_{nom}	NP_{dat}	$><$	NP_{dat}	NP_{nom}
NP_{dat}	NP_{acc}	$><$	NP_{acc}	NP_{dat}
...				

Introduction: specific variation type

Nominal subject and pronominal object in the Mittelfeld

NP(pron)_{acc/dat} NP(full)_{nom} >< NP(full)_{nom} NP(pron)_{acc/dat}

		Mittelfeld		
Object-first	Später nahm	ihn	der Chef	beiseite
Subject-first	...wie	viele Frauen	sich	wünschen

examples from the Negra corpus

- In both main and subordinate clauses, with personal and reflexive pronouns, accusative and dative objects

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examples from the Negra corpus

- In both main and subordinate clauses, with personal and reflexive pronouns, accusative and dative objects
- Object-first is most common, but there are no clear differences in meaning or grammaticality

Introduction: specific variation type

- Variation is well known in reference grammars, and fairly common but little studied in the word order literature:
- Generative paradigm
 - Lenerz (1994): optional movement of S_{nom} to SpecIP
 - Müller (2002): optional S-raising to SpecT (matched constraints)
 - ⇒ no motivation/trigger for movement identified
- Functional paradigm
 - Hoberg (1997): marked subject-first seems to occur more often with proper noun subjects, but no clear tendencies
 - ⇒ Free variation or different usage constraints?

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Corpus analysis: multivariate analysis

- NEGRA corpus (400K, compiled at Saarbrücken)
 - Newspaper materials (*Frankfurter Rundschau*)
 - Morpho-syntactically annotated
- Semi-automatic extraction of relevant instances
 - Clauses with a nominal subject and one pronominal object in the Mittelfeld
 - 995 observations
- Coded for 17 language internal explanatory variables

#		VARIABLE	VALUES
1	Cl.	Clause type	<main>, <subordinate>
2		Clause coda	<following element>, <empty>
3	Pron. object	Pronoun type	<personal>, <reflexive>
4		Case	<accusative>, <dative>
5		Case ambiguity	<i>5 point ordinal scale</i>
6		Valency	<lexicalized>, <not lexicalized>
7		Animacy	<animate>, <inanimate>
8	Nom. Subject	Noun type	<Demonstrative>, <Proper>, <Appellative>, <Indefinite>
9		Length	<i>Lengthdifference subject/object</i>
10		Definiteness	<definite>, <indefinite>
11		Semantic role	<Agent>, <Experiencer>, <Theme>
12		Animacy	<animate>, <inanimate>
13		Accessibility	<i>10 point ordinal scale</i>
14		Set of referents activated	<set activated>, <set not activated>
15	Verb	Position of lexical full verb	<1 st Klammer>, <2 nd Klammer>
16		Genus Verbi	<active>, <passive>
17		Semantic verb class	<existential>, <not-existential>
18	Ext.	Medium	<written>, <spoken>
19		Region	<D>, <A>, <CH>

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- Coded for 17 language internal explanatory variables
- Statistical analysis:
 - Separate effect of each explanatory variable
 - Combined effect in multivariate model: Logistic Regression model

Corpus analysis: multivariate analysis

- Distribution of the two variants

Subj.-first	Object-first
106 (11%)	889 (89%)

- Object-first clearly unmarked variant and Subject-first marked variant
- Specific usage conditions for *marked* variant?

Corpus analysis: multivariate analysis

step	Variable	Odss Ratios
1	SET OF SUBJ. REFERENTS (yes >< no)	21
2	CLAUSE TYPE (Subordinate >< main)	7.5
3	SUBJ. SEM. ROLE (agent >< non-agent)	4
4	SUBJ. ACCESSIBILITY (high >< low)	3
5	OBJ. CASE AMBIGUITY (ambiguous >< not ambig.)	2.5
6	SUBJECT LENGTH (short >< long)	2

Logistic Regression
stepwise selection
(subj-first modelled)
Model sign. Wald < .01
Goodness of fit > .2

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Fairly weak factors
that do not raise
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Corpus analysis: Set activation

	Subj.-first	Object-first
Set activated	67 (52%)	63 (48%)
Set not activated	39 (5%)	889 (95%)

- In the discourse context, a set of alternative referents for the subject referent is activated, either explicitly or implicitly. The set can, but need not be interpreted contrastively (see examples)
- Related to
 - Givón (1983): Potential Interference
 - Chafe (1976)/Rooth (1992): Focus as list of alternatives
 - Birner & Wald (1998): Partially ordered set relations
- Tentative operationalization as yet, but attempt at ‘unprejudiced’ coding by masking order

Corpus analysis: Set activation

- Das schon für Montag geplante Treffen Vassilious mit Denktash mußte verschoben werden , weil **Denktash sich** weigerte , eine Einladung zu akzeptieren , auf der er nur als " Führer " der türkischen Zyprer bezeichnet , sein Kollege Vassiliou hingegen als Präsident der griechischen Zyprer aufgeführt war .
- Im Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB) gibt es keine einhellige Meinung zu den jüngsten Vorschlägen einer sogenannten Gesundheitsreform , die von CDU / CSU , FDP und SPD gemeinsam erarbeitet wurden .Während **das Vorstandsmitglied der IG Metall , Peter Kirch, sich** bei einer sozialpolitischen DGB-Veranstaltung im Main-Kinzig-Kreis als positiv empfand , daß die SPD den früheren Vorschlägen zur Kostendämpfung " einige Giftzähne " gezogen habe , sieht der Kreisvorsitzende Sepp Sigulla den Kompromiß wesentlich kritischer .
- Morgens um 9.00 Uhr spannt die 21jährige zwei Sonnenschirme auf , stellt die Rosen darunter und wartet auf Kundschaft - bis nachmittags um 17.00 Uhr. Dann löst **ihr Bruder sie** für die letzten drei Stunden ab

Corpus analysis: Set activation

- Die Weltwirtschaftsordnung , die die transnationalen Unternehmen und Banken verwirklicht haben , funktioniert .Sie entspricht zwar nicht den Vorstellungen , die insbesondere die Dritte Welt sich in den siebziger Jahren davon gemacht hat
- Die percussive Version des zu Tode genudelten " Bolero " , fiel dermaßen obskur aus , daß selbst Ravel sich amüsiert hätte
- Das Bild der Welt als wirtschaftlicher Handlungszusammenhang rundet sich , wenn man bedenkt , daß ein großer Teil des Welthandels sich innerhalb der transnationalen Firmen abspielt , also eigentlich schon zum Binnenhandel geworden ist .

ABER

- Denn erstens waren die anderen Programme auch nicht interessanter , und zweitens hatte sich die Waschmittel-Werbung erstaunlich weiter entwickelt .



Corpus analysis: Set activation

- The marked word order seems to be used to give prominence or salience to a referent that is part of a contextually activated set of referents
- Marked order is a construction with a pragmatic function:
 - Information structural: drawing attention of the hearer/reader to a salient referent
 - Construal: the salience that is conveyed by the marked order is partially construed subjectively by the speaker/writer
- Compatible with other uses of the marked order in which prominence is not due to set activation, but rather to some other **contextual property** (not yet operationalized):

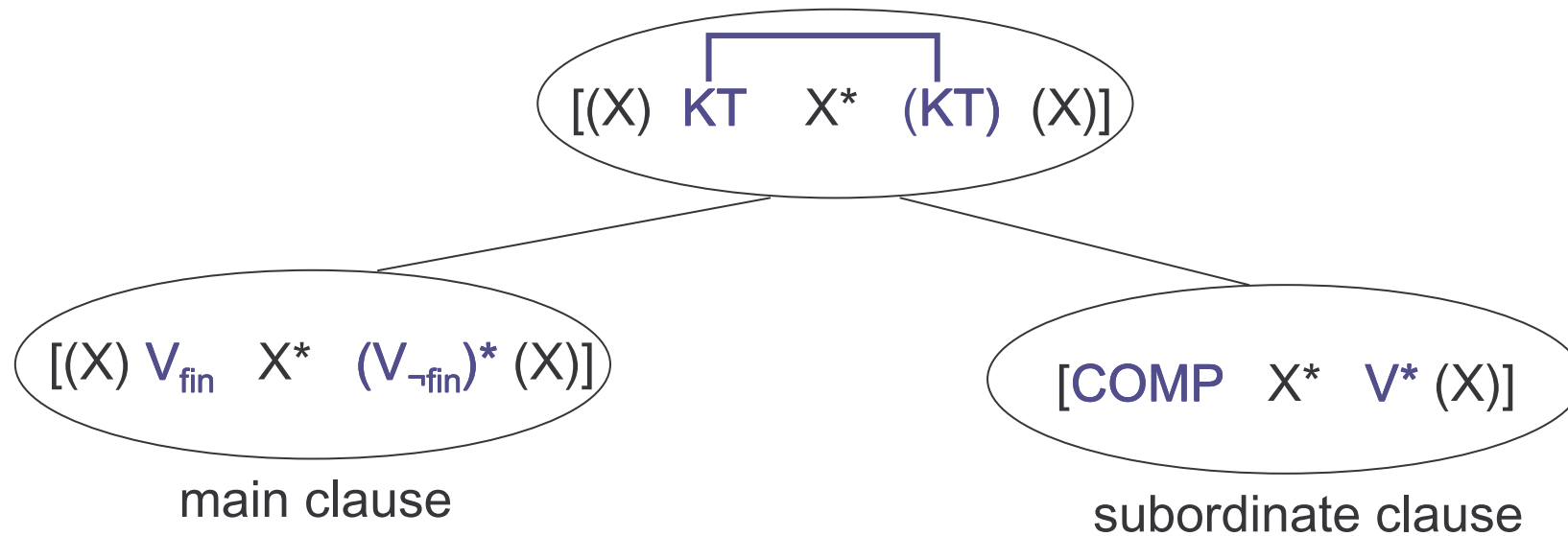
Corpus analysis: Set activation

- Aber in Wirklichkeit setzt **sein Gedichtband sich** mit dem " halben Leben " auseinander , zu dem ihn sein Elternhaus verdammt zu haben schien .
- 20 Jahre im Bolongaropalast - das reicht doch , oder ? " fragt der 67 Jahre alte Zeilsheimer rhetorisch . Aufs Altenteil setzt **Kallert sich** nicht
- " In diesen alten Büchern kann man so viele moderne , aktuelle Ideen entdecken " , sagt Elfriede Bomze-Bamberger , die das Deutsche Albert-Schweitzer-Archiv in der Neuen Schlesingergasse leitet . Sie findet es wichtig , daß **die Besucher sich** ganz in Ruhe aus dem vielen Material , das im Archiv zur Verfügung steht , ihr eigenes Bild des Theologen und Arztes zusammensetzen können .
- Der Ansatz ist , nach bester Philosophenart , prinzipiell der des Zweifels : Allemal machen **das Übliche , alles Normierte und " Normale "** an **ästhetischer und sozialer Praxis** ihn mißtrauisch .
- Nicht mehr einsehbar allerdings ist , wie **eine Linke auf der Höhe der neuen Aufgaben sich** noch im Umfeld der sozialdemokratischen Tradition bewegen könnte

Corpus analysis: relation to less schematic Cx

- The pragmatic function of the marked word order (conveying prominence) is realized in combination with less schematic constructions:
 - Concessive '*während*'
 - Verbs of conflict '*sich weigern*'
 - Focussing particle + NP (*selbst, insbesondere*)
 - *dermassen* ADJ, *dass* NP VP
 - ...
- Could also (partially) explain the unexpected effect of clause type: order not regulated at highest level of schematicity

Klammer-construction



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- Could also (partially) explain the unexpected effect of clause type: order not regulated at highest level of schematicity
- Lower level of schematicity also confirmed by **distinctive verb collexeme analysis** (cf. Gries & Stefanowitsch 2004)

Verbforms ~ subject-first

VERB	FREQ	LLRSTAT	1-P	DIRECTIO	MINEXP
weigert	64	60.94733	1	1	26.68951
weigerte	73	57.94463	1	1	32.8281
weigern	40	30.98813	1	1	18.14887
scheidet	15	28.56955	1	1	4.537217
geweigert	54	24.33906	0.999999	1	29.62536
fuehlt	40	21.24114	0.999996	1	20.81782
ueberlasse	10	20.34415	0.999994	1	2.935847
erklaert	50	20.32326	0.999993	1	28.29089
gezwunger	20	19.36195	0.999989	1	8.27375
trauen	27	18.60719	0.999984	1	12.81097
lieben	17	18.55003	0.999983	1	6.672379
wehren	40	17.46434	0.999971	1	22.1523
bemuehen	35	17.19364	0.999966	1	18.68266
weigerten	36	16.93308	0.999961	1	19.48335
einsetzen	28	16.21783	0.999944	1	14.14544
entschloss	30	15.51607	0.999918	1	15.74681
fuehlen	48	15.18327	0.999902	1	29.09157
bemueht	36	14.17789	0.999834	1	20.55093
helfen	22	13.31667	0.999737	1	10.9427



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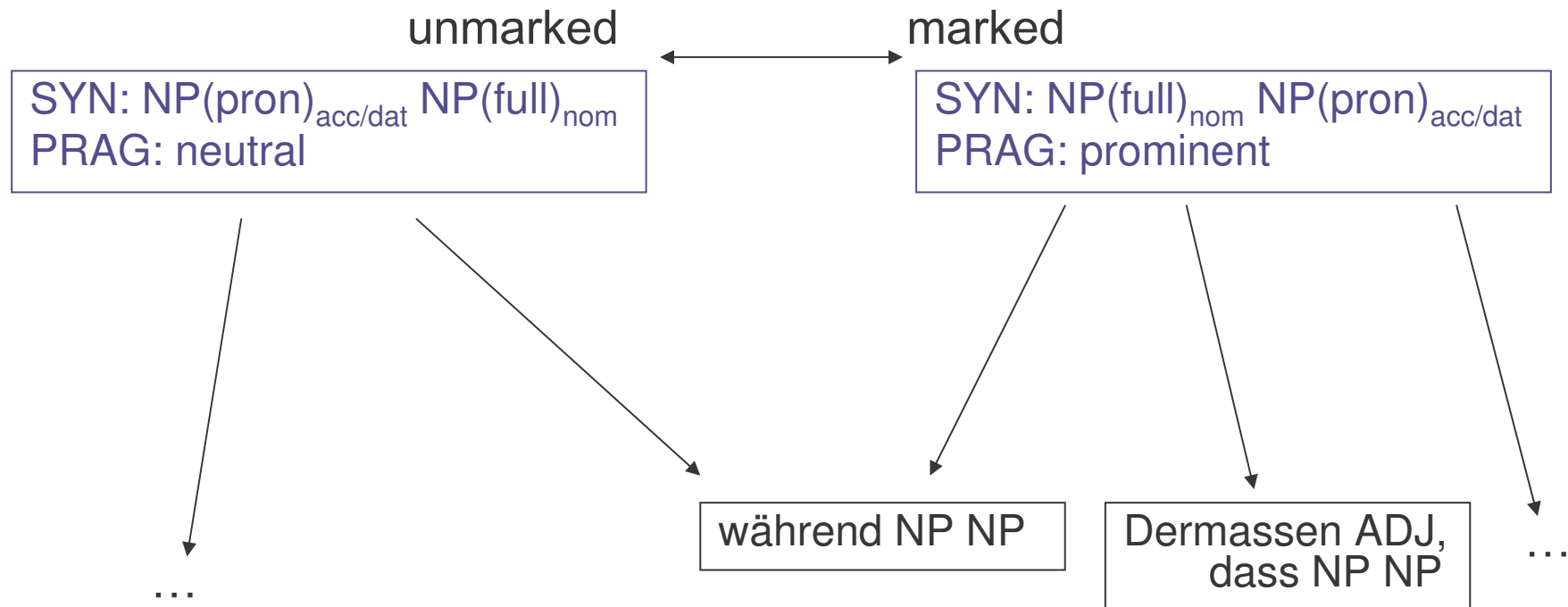
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- Word order variants can be described as highly schematic constructions

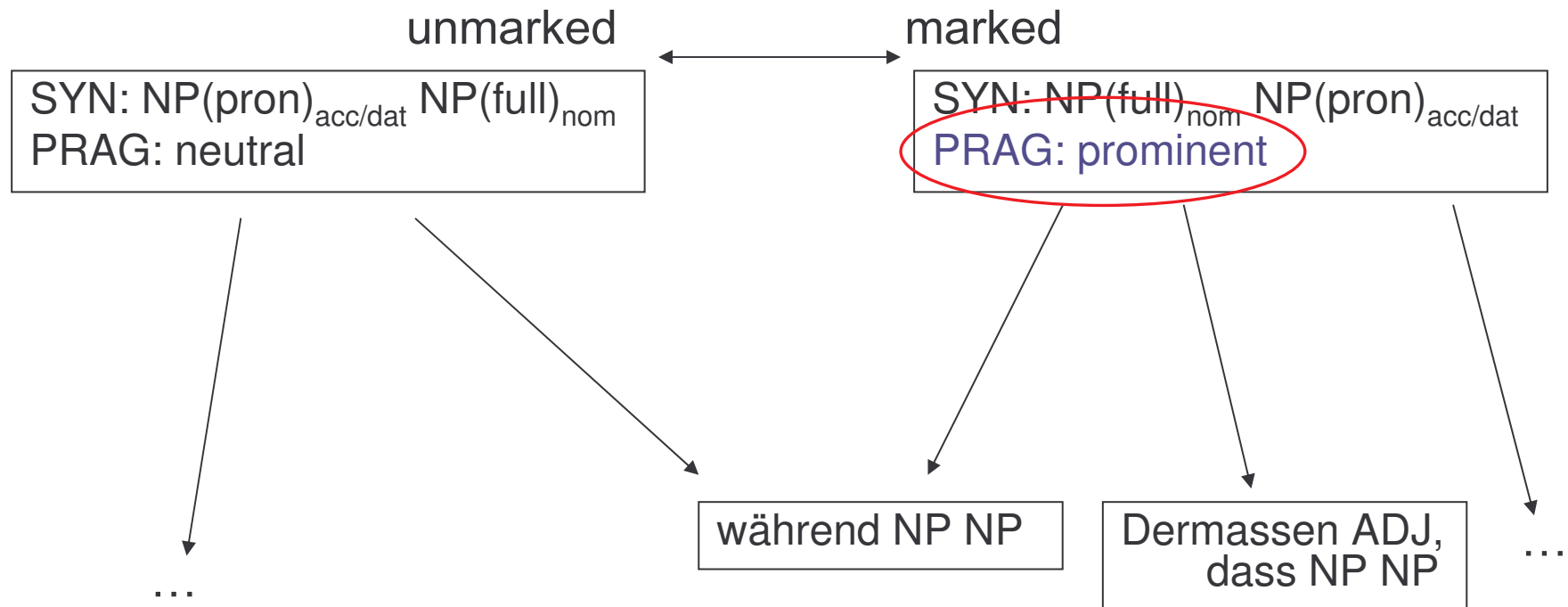
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- Word order variants can be described as highly schematic constructions
- The subject-first word order has a pragmatic function, whereas the object-first order is pragmatically neutral

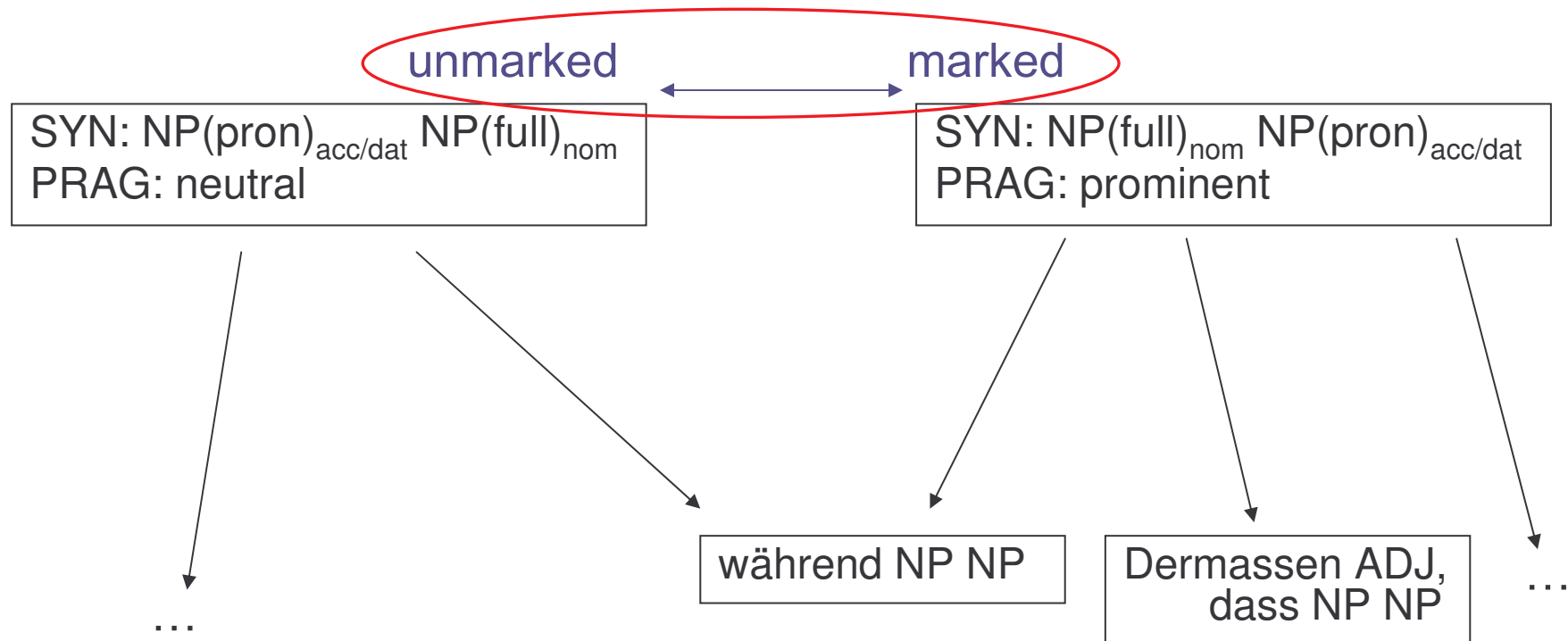
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- There is a markedness relation between the two word order constructions, which directly correlates with their pragmatic functions

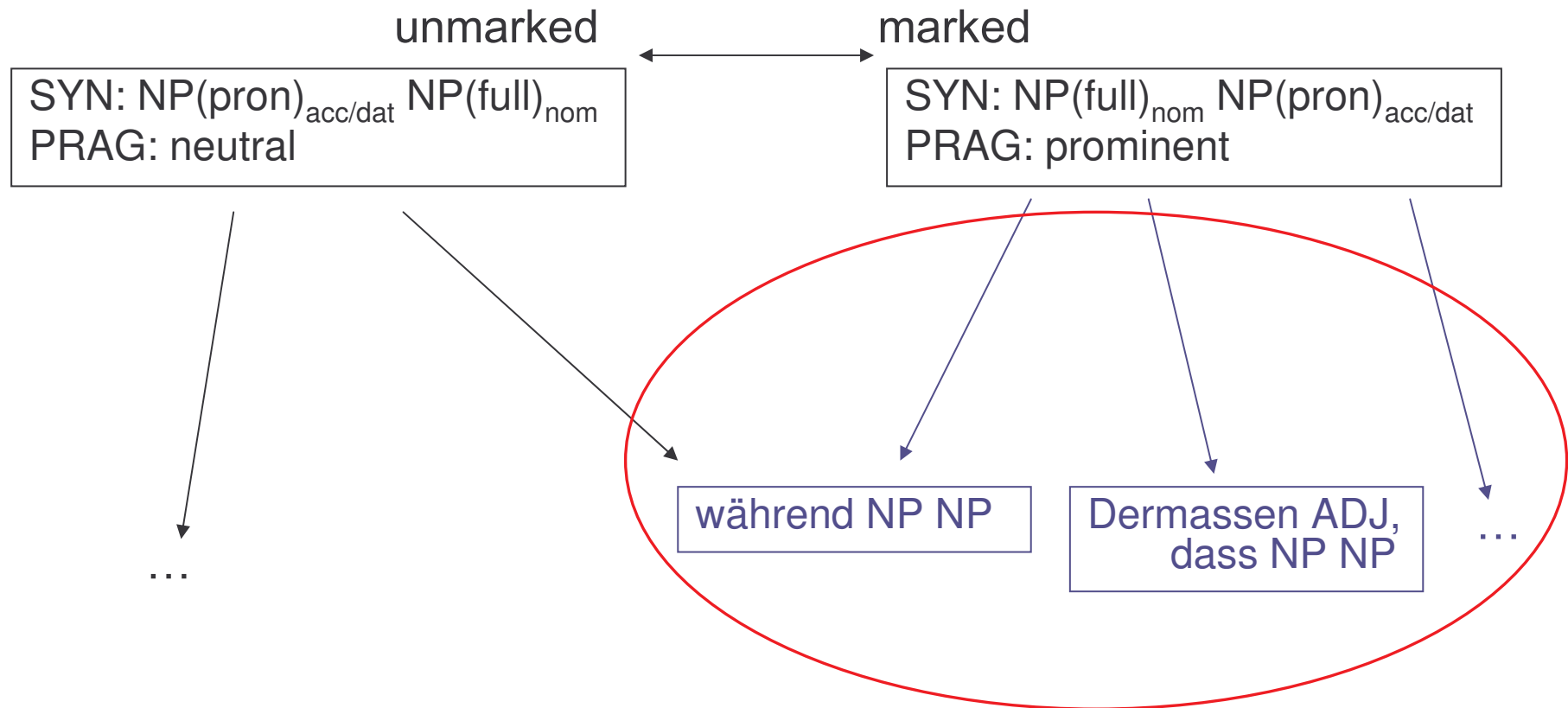
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- There is a markedness relation between the two word order constructions, which directly correlates with their pragmatic functions
- The subject-first word order has relations within the construction to less schematic constructions (inheritance/instantiation vs. schematization/projection)

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Outlook: language change

- Shannon (2000): diachronic shift in Dutch and German
 - Dutch: dominant order shifted from object-first to subject first
 - German: only small increase of subject-first
- Dutch shift interpreted as drift in Germanic from topic-prominence to subject-prominence (cf Burridge 1993)
- Is German lagging behind and still at the early stages of word order grammaticalization? “incipient”
- Can the German synchronic data shed light on the mechanism/motivation that drives change?

Outlook: language change

- If the initial function the “new” subject-first order is to give prominence to some subjects, this function could become extended / generalized to all subjects over time
- Ties in with the evolution of topic-prominence to subject-prominence
- Bears resemblance to grammaticalization cline described by Traugott (1995): propositional – textual - expressive
- The original textual function of word order supplemented with an expressive function (subjective prominence marking), which drives the word order change
- When the shift is completed, the “new” word order loses its marked expressive function and is used “propositional”



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