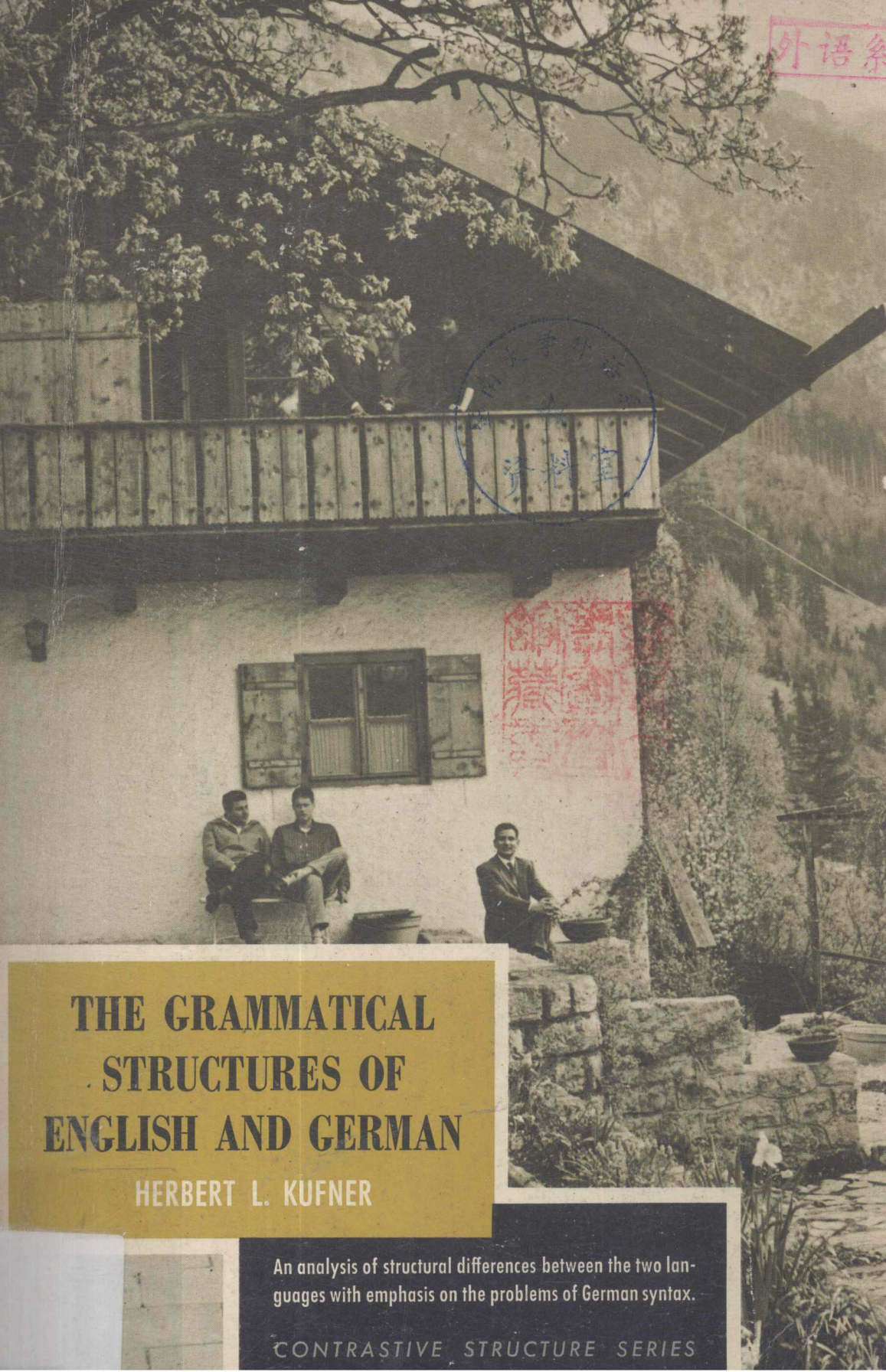

THE GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES OF ENGLISH AND GERMAN

HERBERT L. KUFNER

An analysis of structural differences between the two languages with emphasis on the problems of German syntax.

CONTRASTIVE STRUCTURE SERIES

THE GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES OF ENGLISH AND GERMAN

A CONTRASTIVE SKETCH

Herbert L. Kufner

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THE GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES OF ENGLISH AND GERMAN

CONTRASTIVE STRUCTURE SERIES

Charles A. Ferguson

General Editor

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

This study is part of a series of contrastive structure studies which describe the similarities and differences between English and each of the five foreign languages most commonly taught in the United States: French, German, Italian, Russian, and Spanish. Each of the five languages is represented by two volumes in the series, one on the sound systems and the other on the grammatical systems of English and the language in question. The volumes on sounds make some claim to completeness within the limits appropriate to these studies; the volumes on grammar, however, treat only selected topics, since complete coverage would be beyond the scope of the series. The studies are intended to make available for the language teacher, textbook writer, or other interested reader a body of information which descriptive linguists have derived from their contrastive analyses of English and the other languages.

The Center for Applied Linguistics, in undertaking this series of studies, has acted on the conviction held by many linguists and specialists in language teaching that one of the major problems in the learning of a second language is the interference caused by the structural differences between the native language of the learner and the second language. A natural consequence of this conviction is the belief that a careful contrastive analysis of the two languages offers an excellent basis for the preparation of instructional materials, the planning of courses, and the development of actual classroom techniques.

The project got under way in the summer of 1959. The primary responsibility for the various parts of the project fell to specialists of demonstrated competence in linguistics having a strong interest in the application of linguistics to practical problems of language teaching. Wherever possible, a recognized senior scholar specializing in the foreign language was selected either as a consultant or as an author.

Since it did not seem likely that the users of the series would generally read all five studies, considerable duplication was permitted in the material presented. Also, although a general framework was suggested for the studies and some attempt was made to achieve a uniformity of procedure by consultation among those working on the project, each team was given free rein to follow its own approach. As a result, the parts of the series vary in style, terminology, notation, and in the relative emphasis given to different aspects of the analysis.

Some differences in these studies are also due to the wide range of variation in American English, especially in the pronunciation of vowels. No special consideration was given to English spoken outside America since the studies were primarily intended

for language teachers and textbook writers in this country. There are also differences in the studies which depend on the structure of each of the foreign languages under comparison. Thus, if a fact of English agrees well with a feature of German it may merit little mention, if any, in an English-German contrastive study, but if the same fact differs in a complicated and highly significant way from a corresponding feature of Spanish, it may require elaborate treatment in an English-Spanish study.

In the course of the project several by-products were produced, two of which are worth noting as of possible interest to readers of volumes in this series. One, Linguistic Reading Lists for Teachers of Modern Languages (Washington, D.C., 1962) was compiled chiefly by linguists working on the project and contains a carefully selected and annotated list of works which linguists would recommend to the teacher of French, German, Italian, Russian, or Spanish. The other, W. W. Gage's Contrastive Studies in Linguistics (Washington, D.C., 1961) consists of an unannotated listing of all contrastive studies which had come to the attention of the Center by the summer of 1961.

Although the value of contrastive analysis has been recognized for some time, relatively few substantial studies have been published. In a sense, then, this series represents a pioneering venture in the field of applied linguistics and, as with all such ventures, some of the material may eventually turn out to be of little value and some of the methods used may turn out to be inadequate. The authors and editor are fully convinced of the value of the studies, however, and hope that the series will represent an important step in the application of linguistic procedures to language problems. They are also agreed in their expectation that, while in another ten years this series may seem primitive and unsatisfactory, the principles of contrastive analysis will be more widely recognized and appreciated.

Charles A. Ferguson
Director, Center for Applied Linguistics

PREFACE

This book is not intended as a structural description or as a grammar of German: it makes no claim of completeness or even uniqueness. Its purpose is rather to be maximally useful for American language teachers and writers of textbooks by dwelling on those areas where German and English are most different. Its major emphasis is on syntax, the traditional stepchild of grammatical studies. Very little space is devoted to morphological problems. The spoken language is stressed because I believe the teaching of German should proceed from the spoken language. Nevertheless, the written language and the problems which are peculiarly characteristic of written style have not been neglected.

I should like to express my indebtedness and gratitude to my former teacher Professor William G. Moulton, now at Princeton University. The imprint of his help and guidance can be found on every page of this study.

H.L.K.

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GERMAN SENTENCE TYPES 1

1.0 INTRODUCTORY

Before we look into the structure of German phrases and clauses, we shall attempt to define and classify the favorite sentence types of German.

There are two sentence definitions which are widely used in today's grammar books. The first one is notional and is perhaps best formulated by Otto Jespersen (Philosophy of Grammar, p. 307):

> A sentence is a (relatively) complete and independent human utterance—the completeness and independence of it being shown by its standing alone or its capability of standing alone, i.e., of being uttered by itself.

The other sentence definition which haunts the textbooks is a formal one:

> A sentence is a group of words containing a subject and a predicate, and it must not be subordinated to a larger construction so as to form a dependent clause.

This second definition we shall have to discard at the very outset since we all know that in both English and German there exist large numbers of utterances which we wish to call sentences and which do not contain a subject and a predicate. Leaving aside for the moment such complete utterances as Nein or Natürlich, there is a group of sentences in German which contains only a predicate: Mich friert or Hier wird sonntags getanzt.

The notional definition of Jespersen is worded in such a way as to include such utterances as Guten Morgen and Unsinn. Such utterances, as Jespersen and many other analysts point out, are fully as self-supporting and complete as sentences which do contain a subject and a predicate: Ich wünsche Ihnen einen guten Morgen or Das ist Unsinn.

This is, of course, true; yet it does not result in a definition which provides us with a useful tool by which we can separate sentences from non-sentences, unless we can say what we mean by completeness or even relative completeness. In a very real sense, very few groups of words which we would unanimously punctuate as sentences can really be called complete or capable of standing alone. Let us, for example, look at the utterance: Das hat er damit gemeint. We would all expect our students to capitalize the first word of this utterance and to put a period at the end. But in what sense is it really complete? Can

it really stand alone? We should at least know the reference of das, damit, and er if we are to derive a meaning. Thus this sentence is not complete and self-supporting at all, but totally dependent on information given by antecedents outside this sentence. Everyone of us could produce innumerable sentences of this type which would have meaning only in connected discourse: like most of the sentences that we speak, they are dependent on what has been said before.

If we think of it in terms of teaching, this notional definition of a sentence shows its most serious weakness. It is, indeed, a completely subjective definition. A number of lexical items uttered in sequence is a sentence if it is complete. However, since there are no formal signs of completeness, we are left without means of explaining completeness to a student who does not already know. We are reduced to a circular explanation: a sentence is a complete statement; a complete statement is one that is self-supporting; it is self-supporting if it is complete; ergo: a complete statement is a statement which is complete.

Thus we are forced to abandon the "complete thought" definition since it permits us to identify sentences only by exercising our "sentence sense." But once a student has "sentence sense" he no longer needs to be taught to identify sentences, and a student who lacks this ability is unlikely to acquire it by being told that it is a "(relatively) complete thought."

The sections on German phrase and clause structure will be based on the admittedly optimistic assumption that the student of German will have a fair degree of "sentence sense" in his native English. Naturally, we thus expose ourselves to the charge of evading the issue, but since the sole purpose of this study is to find ways of helping the student to learn German better, we feel no qualms about being non-definitive on points of English grammar. (English sentence types have long been of serious concern to the linguist. Chapter 2 of Charles C. Fries' Structure of English [New York, 1952] is devoted to a discussion of the problem and its background. At present it seems that the solution will eventually be found by using the criteria of intonation patterns or in applying the methodology of transformational analysis [Noam Chomsky et al.]. The problem has turned out to be much more complicated than was at first supposed, and as of the present there is, to our knowledge, no solution which seems completely acceptable to us. Thus we feel justified in taking the stand that we do.)

Our problem here will be a discussion and classification of German sentence types. We have shown above that a definition or classification by meaning will not yield useful results. What we need are formal signs which help us in determining what "completeness" is. Perhaps we should repeat here that language is for us primarily the spoken language—which means in the present context that we are searching for signs of completeness which the student can hear. Once we have succeeded in teaching the student to recognize a sentence when he hears it spoken, and, when speaking himself, to produce an utterance which native speakers of German will accept as a sentence, we do not envisage any difficulty in applying this knowledge to the written language.

Our first classification of German sentence types will be into normal and abnormal. Since this primary division is based on pitch (or intonation) patterns it may be

necessary for the reader to refer to the section on phonology which deals with intonation. (W. G. Moulton, The Sounds of English and German, pp. 129-38.)

We shall call those German sentences which end with the pitch patterns . . . 3-1↓, . . . 2-1↓ or . . . 3-3↑, . . . 2-3↑ NORMAL SENTENCES. All sentences which end in some other pitch pattern we shall call ABNORMAL SENTENCES.

Our reasons for doing this are that . . . 3(2)-1↓ and . . . 3(2)-3↑ seem to be German morphemes meaning in part something like "completed utterance." Other final pitch patterns do not have this meaning. Sentences with other pitch patterns include all interrupted utterances. Thus they can have any structure whatever that occurs in German. Note that we do not exclude "verbless sentences" or any other construction in German which some grammarians might consider "abnormal." Our formal criteria based on this limited number of terminal pitch patterns merely allow us to dispense with utterances that were interrupted by some external means or any kind of speech deficiency.

Hence, NORMAL SENTENCE TYPES can consist of any free form, i.e., any form which is not part of a larger construction, containing the terminal morphemes . . . 3(2)-1↓ or . . . 3(2)3↑. These we shall now classify further on the following basis:

1) Those utterances which contain a finite verb form (in an independent clause) are MAJOR SENTENCES.
2) All other utterances are MINOR SENTENCES.

1.1 MINOR SENTENCE TYPES

We shall first deal with the minor sentences. They can be subdivided as follows:

I. PLAIN MINOR SENTENCES containing the morphemes . . . 3-1↓ or . . . 2-1↓.

A. Without a verb form. Examples:

Ja	Nein	Im Büro	Eine Mark zwanzig
Ruhe	Blödsinn	Guten Morgen	Ellbogen vom Tisch

This type of verbless sentence is very common in the spoken varieties of both German and English, and it is by no means as rare in the written language as is often claimed. Since English exhibits the same types of verbless sentences as German, there is no need to discuss them further.

B. With a verb form.

1. Non-finite verb form.

a. Infinitive. Examples:

Nicht hupen	Rechts halten	Rühren
Maul halten	Schneller gehen	

This type of minor sentence does not seem to exist in English, although there are no formal reasons why 'keep right,' 'be good,' 'go slow' could not contain infinitives. But the

consensus of opinion among scholars of English marks the verb forms in these sentences as imperatives.

b. Participial. Examples:

Morgen geschlossen	Parken verboten
Gut gemacht	Fertig gegessen

Here again, the German sentences are parallel to such English constructions as 'closed today,' 'well done.' Since there is little likelihood of error on the part of the student, we need not discuss this type of sentence any further.

2. Finite Verb Form (in a dependent clause). Examples:

Wenn er nur endlich käme
Was Du nicht sagst
Wie der immer angibt

There is a one-to-one correspondence between English and German with sentences of this type, and no further discussion is deemed necessary. Differences in word order will be discussed in the section on Clause Structure.

II. INTERROGATIVE MINOR SENTENCES contain the morphemes . . . 3-3↑ or . . . 2-3↑. Each of the above sentence types is included here if they contain these pitch patterns. The meaning is then something like "Is that what you said (meant, wanted)?"

Our classification thus far has dealt with the abnormal and minor sentence forms. Statistically they are quite uncommon in formal speech, though considerably more frequent in informal speech. Even in the written varieties of both English and German they appear much more often than is generally assumed. From any classificational point of view, however, they are relatively unimportant. Moreover, we have seen that in all instances the German types of minor sentences are matched with almost exact equivalents in the student's native language, and thus we feel that they do not warrant further discussion in this study. Much more important both from the classificational and pedagogical viewpoints are the MAJOR SENTENCE TYPES.

Here we use five criteria for classification, each of them set up as a binary opposition:

1) Two pitch types: . . . 3(2)-1↓ or . . . 3(2)-3↑.
2) Two structural types: actor-action (AA), with a subject and a predicate; and action (A), with only a predicate.
3) Two verb forms: imperative and non-imperative. The non-imperative forms are subdivided into present subjunctive and non-present-subjunctive forms.
4) Two verb positions: First or second element in the sentence.
5) Two selection types: beginning with or without a question expression (including question words: wer, was, wie, wann, wo, warum, womit, welch-, etc.).

Before we proceed any further with this outline of German sentence types we should pause here to clarify once more the exact nature of this classification and the limits of its applicability (usefulness) to avoid any misunderstandings on the part of the user.

This classification is based on the assumption that the following two German sentences have the same fundamental structure.

1) Er trinkt.
2) Der arme alte Mann, der gestern in völlig betrunkenem Zustande von der Polizei aufgegriffen wurde und seit mehr als zehn Jahren den Behörden als unheilbar Trunksüchtiger bekannt ist, trinkt bedeutend mehr als ihm bekommt, wiewohl er weiss, dass dieser Umstand ihn früher als unbedingt notwendig ins Grab bringen wird, wobei all die Schulden unbezahlt bleiben werden, die als der tiefere Grund für seine Trunksucht angesehen werden müssen.

That is to say: both sentences consist of subject and predicate. By using the present classification they would be grouped together as identical. The (obvious) differences between them lie not in the sentence as such, but in the structure of the constituent elements of the sentence, viz. the subject and the predicate. We shall deal with the internal structure of subject and predicate in the section on Phrase Structure.

1.2 MAJOR SENTENCE TYPES

I. With the terminal intonation morphemes . . . 2-1↓ or . . . 3-1↓.

A. Imperative verb form.

Action only:	Komm	Komm mit	Bleibt hier
Actor-Action:	Komm du doch mit		
	Bleibt ihr doch hier		

This second type does not exist in English and the beginning student is likely to encounter difficulties here. This difficulty is best met by specially designed drills. Particular attention should be given to the fact that these Actor-Action imperative sentences will always have the sentence stress on the word which denotes the Actor (subject). Statistically, however, the actorless type of imperative sentence is much more common.

The verb form does not have to be in first position in the sentence, though it usually is. A clause may precede:

Wenn du Lust hast, komm mit.
Sobald du fertig bist, ruf an.

Aside from co-ordinating conjunctions (und, aber, etc.), a small number of adverbs may precede the verb form:

Jetzt komm schon endlich.
Nun überlegt euch's nicht lange.

B. Non-imperative verb form.

1. Verb in first position.

a. Present subjunctive. Examples:

Actor-Action:	Seien Sie froh
	Möge es Ihnen gelingen

b. Non-present-subjunctive verb form. Examples:

Action only:	Friert dich	Ist dir kalt
	Wird hier viel gebaut	
Actor-Action:	Hast du Zeit	Kann er mitfahren
	Sind Sie froh	

Here we should note that there is a growing tendency among German speakers to pronounce these sentences (Type B.1.b) with the terminal pitch pattern . . . (2)3-3↑. This rising terminal contour has traditionally been prevalent in the South German standard, and during the last two decades it has become more and more frequent in the North as well. This is particularly true if the sentence can be answered by yes or no. Thus we encounter a possible contrast in such sentences as:

Isst du zuhause	with . . . (2)3-3↑
Isst du zuhause oder im Restaurant	with . . . (2)3-1↓ OR . . . (2)3-3↑.

In the second example the . . . (2)3-3↑ intonation is felt to be more friendly and polite than the . . . (2)3-1↓ intonation.

Although many verbs demand a different structure in equivalent sentences in English, most students do not usually have trouble with this German sentence type, since verbs such as have, be, and the modal auxiliaries show identical syntactic behavior in English.

2. Verb in second position.

a. Question expression first. Examples:

Action only:	Wie ist dir jetzt zumute
	Warum ist dir so kalt
	Wann wird hier endlich sauber gemacht
Actor-Action:	Wer spricht
	Wie heisst er
	Mit welchem Zug kommt er an

There is a very close resemblance between English and German with sentences of this type, and the difficulties for the learner are few, except for sentences which contain a predicate only. Special drills must be designed to meet this difficulty.

b. Other expression first. Examples:

Action only:	Ihn friert
	Mir ist kalt
	Jetzt wird aufgeräumt
	Wenn ich Martinis trinke, wird mir immer schlecht