VP-fronting: movement vs. dislocation

The goal of this talk is to show that "VP-fronting" is not a uniform construction type but can be realized in at least two different ways across languages. Specifically, while VP-fronting in German (GVF, (1a)) is movement to the CP edge (1b), English VP-fronting (EVF, (2a)) is VP-dislocation with a null counterpart of resumptive *that* ((2b), to be refined presently).

(1) a. Das Buch gelesen hat Peter.
the book read has Peter
b. [$_{CP}$ [$_{VP}$ das Buch gelesen]$_i$ hat Peter t_i]

(2) a. (…and) Read the book, John did.
b. [$_{VP}$ read the book]$_i$ [$_{CP}$ (that$_i$) John did t_i]

(2b) fails to account for the fact that EVF (like GVF) shows connectivity effects. I propose that EVF should be analyzed in terms of Ott's (2014) approach to left-dislocation, according to which dislocated XPs are elliptical sentence fragments (3b), akin to fragment responses (4).

(3) a. (and) See himself$_i$/*him$_i$ in the mirror, John$_i$ did.
b. [$_{CP1}$ ~~John did~~ [$_{VP}$ see himself/*him in the mirror]$_i$] [$_{CP2}$ (that$_i$) John did t_i]

(4) A: What will John do? B: ~~He will~~ [$_{VP}$ see himself in the mirror].

A further commonality of EVF and GVF is that both constructions are island-sensitive (5,6a). In GVF, this is due to the movement dependency relating VP and its trace (5), whereas in EVF locality constrains the dependency relating the VP-placeholder to its trace (6b).

(5) *[Das Buch gelesen]$_i$ kennt Peter [niemanden [der t_i hat]].
the book read knows Peter no-one who has

(6) a. *Read the book, John doesn't know anybody who did.
b. *[$_{CP2}$ (that$_i$) John doesn't know [$_{DP}$ anybody [$_{CP}$ who did t_i]]]

Despite this parallel, there are differences with regard to locality. Since in EVF it is the silent placeholder (rather than VP itself) that moves, the construction is insensitive to *wh*-islands (✓*Fix the car, I wonder whether he will*; Chomsky 1986:20); in this regard, it behaves like DP extraction rather than predicate fronting. This follows if what moves in EVF is the nominal placeholder, whereas VP itself moves in GVF, where no such insensitivity is found.

The movement vs. dislocation analysis accounts for several deeper asymmetries between GVF and EVF. For instance, by assigning fronted VPs in EVF the status of extra-clausal fragments, it explains why the latter are prosodically separated from their host sentence (as indicated by commas in orthography), unlike fronted VPs in GVF. It also derives an information-structural/prosodic asymmetry: as ellipsis fragments, fronted VPs in EVF are necessarily (contrastively) STRESSED (7a), whereas in GVF they can be *deaccented* (7b).

(7) Who read the book? a. #*Read the book*, JOHN *did*. b. ✓*Das Buch gelesen hat* PETER.

The differential analysis of EVF and GVF generates various further welcome predictions. It correctly predicts that EVF is licensed only where the silent nominal placeholder is licensed clause-internally ((2a) vs. (8a)), whereas no such requirement holds for GVF (9).

(8) a. *[$_{VP}$ Leave early], I saw them.
b. *That$_i$ I saw them t_i.

(9) [$_{VP}$ Früh gehen] habe ich sie gesehen.
early leave have I them seen

The analysis furthermore correctly predicts that EVF (10) but not GVF (11) tolerates mismatches in verbal morphology (Breul 2014). This is so because the elliptical clause containing the "fronted" VP in EVF permits semantically vacuous *do*-support (10c).

(10) a. [$_{VP}$ Lose her temper], she has.
b. *She has lose her temper.
c. [$_{CP1}$ ~~she did~~ [$_{VP}$ lose her temper]] [$_{CP2}$ (that$_i$) she has t_i]

(11) [$_{VP}$ Die Fassung verloren/*verlieren] hat sie
the temper lost/*lose has she

Mismatches of this kind are not unconstrained in EVF, and I show that their distribution tracks the availability of an underlying dislocation source.

Similarly, EVF (12a) but not GVF (13) permits "Aux-doubling" (Thoms & Walkden 2015):

(12) a. [$_{VP}$ Willingly <u>been</u> examined by the committee], he certainly has <u>been</u>.
b. [$_{CP1}$ ~~he has~~ [$_{VP}$ willingly been examined by …]] [$_{CP2}$ (that$_i$) he certainly has been t_i]

(13) [$_{VP}$ Gründlich vom Arzt untersucht <u>worden</u>] ist er sicher (*<u>worden</u>).
carefully by.the doctor examined been is he certainly been

Again, this difference follows from the assumption that fronted VPs in EVF are remnants of clausal ellipsis (12b), whereas they are directly connected to clause-internal traces in German.

An important further corollary of the analysis is that fronted VPs in EVF, but not in GVF, must be syntactically complete. This is descriptively captured by Phillips' (2003) *Potential Complete-VP Constraint* (adapted from Phillips 2003:75; also Landau 2007 on Hebrew):

(14) <u>CVPC:</u> A fronted VP must be a potential complete VP, with the consequence that strictly subcategorized VP-material cannot be stranded.

While EVF adheres to the CVPC, German famously permits fronting of remnant VPs (RVF) that strands subcategorized arguments (Müller 1998).

(15) a. *Read, John did the book.
b. [$_{CP1}$ ~~John did~~ [$_{VP}$ read ~~the book~~]$_i$] *[$_{CP2}$ (that$_i$) John did t_i the book]

(16) a. Gelesen hat Peter das Buch.
read has Peter the book
b. [$_{VP}$ t_k gelesen]$_i$ hat Peter das Buch$_k$ t_i

Even if *the book* could delete in CP_1 of (15b), the "stranded" argument is not licensed (Case/θ-marked) in CP_2, where *that* replaces V(P). By contrast, adverbials can be "stranded" freely (*Read the book, John did <u>on Tuesday</u>*), since they do not require such licensing.

Traditionally, the crosslinguistic contrast exemplified in (15,16) has been explained by the availability of scrambling in German vs. its absence in English. It has been known for some time, however, that the putatively requisite evacuation movements cannot be equated with scrambling (Fanselow 2002, Trinh 2009), and that various languages (e.g. Hebrew, Spanish) permit RVF but show no productive scrambling at all. The present analysis sidesteps these problems for the traditional view, by linking the availability of RVF not to scrambling but to the general nature of VP-fronting (movement vs. dislocation).

My treatment of EVF is similar in spirit to a recent proposal by Thoms & Walkden (2015), who argue that EVF involves a monoclausal "matching" structure. I show that my analysis overcomes several significant empirical and conceptual shortcomings of Thoms & Walkden's.

Why is EVF implemented as VP-dislocation, and what prevents fronting of the GVF kind? I suggest that this asymmetry is due to a general ban against fronting of overt non-operator XPs to the CP edge in English, which does not hold for German (cf. Rizzi 1990). Being non-operators, VPs and other non-operator XPs can thus only be fronted by means of dislocation (as foreshadowed in Chomsky 1977, now recast in terms of Ott 2014). I end with some tentative remarks on the wider crosslinguistic syntax of VP-fronting.

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