

XVI. MECHANICAL TRANSLATION*

V. H. Yngve
Eileen H. Bobrow
Carol M. Bosche
Elinor K. Charney
Ann Congleton
J. L. Darlington

Ursula R. Funke
T. R. Hofmann
Muriel S. Kannel
E. S. Klima
B. S. Knobe

J. D. McCawley
T. More, Jr.
W. K. Percival
A. A. Querido
B. K-Y. T'sou
J. M. Winett

A. INDEFINITE EXPRESSIONS IN GERMAN

There is a grammatical relation in German between negative expressions such as niemals, nirgends, niemand, nichts, and the corresponding indefinite expressions jemals, irgendwo, jemand, and etwas. By an indefinite expression is meant one which refers to no particular individual. Thus jemand, etwas, and irgendwo are indefinite expressions in the following sentences:

- (1) Hat jemand den Chef gesehen?
- (2) Ich bin gespannt, ob er etwas findet.
- (3) Ich zweifle daran, dass er sie irgendwo gesehen hat.

On the other hand, in the following sentences the same expressions are not indefinite expressions but rather indeterminate expressions:

- (4) Jemand hat den Chef gesehen.
- (5) Er hat etwas gefunden.
- (6) Er hat sie irgendwo gesehen.

Indeterminate expressions refer to particular, though unspecified individuals. Thus (6) is interpreted 'There is a place where he has seen her'.

While jemand, etwas, and irgendwo occur both as indefinite and indeterminate expressions jemals is always indefinite, e. g.:

- (7) Hat er sie jemals gesehen?

and not

- (8) *Er hat sie jemals gesehen.

Irgendwann and (ein)mal, on the other hand, occur in both functions:

- (9) Hat er sie irgendwann gesehen?
- (10) Hat er sie mal gesehen?
- (11) Er hat sie irgendwann gesehen.
- (12) Er hat sie mal gesehen.

If the distinction between indefinite and indeterminate expressions is maintained, it is possible to account for the behavior of these words with respect to negation. The negative expressions niemand, nichts, niemals, and nirgends can be analyzed as having the grammatical properties of the corresponding indefinites, rather than the

*This work was supported in part by the National Science Foundation under Grant GN-244.

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indeterminates. That is to say, it seems reasonable to analyze niemals, for example, as containing the indefinite jemals, rather than the indeterminate irgendwann. Crudely expressed, niemals is jemals plus nicht.

The indeterminate expressions, on the other hand, may occur with the negative particle, e. g.:

(13) Jemand hat mich nicht gegrüsst.

(14) Er hat etwas nicht sehen wollen.

(15) Er hat sie irgendwo nicht gesehen.

A further difference between indefinite and indeterminate expressions is the following. Only the leftmost of a series of indefinite expressions is negated, and after a negated indefinite expression no indeterminate expression may occur. Thus there is

(16) Niemand hat mich jemals gegrüsst

but not

(17) *Niemand hat mich niemals gegrüsst.

On the other hand, the sentence

(18) Jemand hat mich nie gegrüsst

contains an instance of the indeterminate jemand, not the indefinite jemand. Thus any occurrence of jemand is interpreted as an indeterminate if no nicht or no negated indefinite expression occurs to its left. Once an indeterminate expression has occurred, however, a negative expression may occur to its right, as in (18).

These facts have repercussions on the prepose rule discussed in Quarterly Progress Report No. 67 (pages 168-171). The prepose rule takes certain non-initial constituents and moves them to initial position. Thus when applied to the underlying syntactic representation of

(19) Mein Bruder geht abends in den Klub

the prepose rule enables the following sentences to be generated:

(20) Abends geht mein Bruder in den Klub.

(21) In den Klub geht mein Bruder abends.

The unattached negative particle nicht cannot be preposed, i. e., there is no sentence of the type

(22) *Nicht geht mein Bruder abends in den Klub.

When the negative particle is attached, however, it accompanies the constituent to which it is attached when the latter is preposed, e. g.:

(23) Nicht in den Klub geht mein Bruder abends.

(24) Niemals geht mein Bruder in den Klub.

(25) Nirgends seh ich ihn.

The behavior of the indefinites and indeterminates with regard to the prepose rule is characteristic. No indefinite expression may be preposed unless it is attached to the negative particle. Thus the sentence

(26) Keine Klage kommt jemals über seine Lippen
has no sentence associated with it of the type

(27) *Jemals kommt keine Klage über seine Lippen.

This is a consequence of the already mentioned fact that an indefinite expression, such as jemals, cannot occur to the left of a negated expression, such as keine Klagen. It follows therefore that the two following sentences are not related to one another as, say, (19) is to (20):

(28) Jemand kommt nie nach Wien mehr.

(29) Nie kommt jemand nach Wien mehr.

Rather (29) must be related to

(30) Niemand kommt jemals nach Wien mehr.

Thus, the prepose rule is not a word order rule, i. e., it does not operate on syntactic constituents that will eventually appear as words in the final phonetic output. After the prepose rule has operated on a series of indefinite expressions of which the first was negated, the negative particle must finish up attached to the leftmost indefinite expression as before.

W. K. Percival

