

Constraints on the Sentence Initial Position of German Verb Second Clauses – in the Light of Fanselow’s Concept of ‘Formal Movement’

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Abstract

The present contribution reflects how Gisbert Fanselow’s article *Quirky “Subjects” and Other Specifiers* from 2002 influenced my work. The relevant operation is Formal Movement, which characterizes the raising of the highest middle field constituent to the initial position of a verb second clause as A-movement. This concept allows for a simple account of sentence initial object *es*. However, it will be shown that a restriction is at work, which shows that Formal Movement is not a completely blind syntactic mechanism. Specific semantic material cannot be subject to this operation: thoroughly expressive expressions.

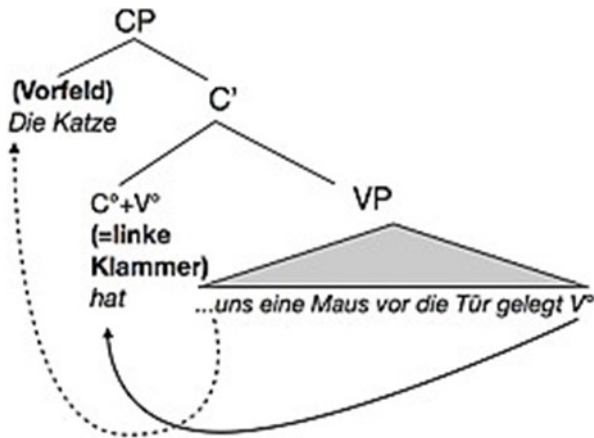
1. Introduction: Fanselow’s Approach to the Initial Position of Verb Second Clauses

In his contribution *Quirky “Subjects” and Other Specifiers* (2002), Gisbert Fanselow explores the question of what a subject is and how meaningful this question is for the theory of grammar. A side or sub-question of the larger issue of subjecthood is what the nature of a so-called “quirky subject” is. In the meantime, much work has been done in the field to define a quirky subject. It seems that much of the issue boils down to definitions and conventions among grammarians as to what sufficient or necessary features constitute the subject of a clause. Most of this research is not relevant for the aspects of the given contribution. However, some core aspects of Fanselow’s paper are most important for the main claim of the present contribution. The crucial issue here is the status of the sentence initial position of a German(ic) declarative verb second clause; or to put it in more traditional terms of German grammar: the nature of the so-called “Vorfeld” (prefield).

Fanselow identifies and presents two approaches to German verb second, which are still actual and valid today: Koster (1975) and Thiersch (1978) (one

may also add the even earlier Bierwisch (1963) as a classic approach on how to derive the typical word order). From a subordinate-like base structure (1), the finite verb raises from its final base position to C^0 – traditionally called the left sentence bracket. Furthermore, any sentential constituent – a maximal projection – gets moved to the initial specifier position of C^0 – the prefield.

- (1) dass der Peter den Hans eingeladen hat
 that the Peter the Hans invited has
 ‘that Peter invited Hans.’
- (2) [CP [DP Den Hans]_i [C' [C hat]_k] [IP der Peter t_i eingeladen t_k]]]
- (3)



<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/V2-Stellung>

Thus, the final verb second word order is derived by two movement operations: (i) the finite verb raises from its deep and linearly seen right-most position to the designated slot (alternatively) occupied by the subordinating complementizer in embedded clauses, i.e., the C^0 -position; and (ii) any full constituent (maximal projection XP) gets promoted to the specifier of this head position, which equals the so called prefield. (3), copied from Wikipedia, proves that the approach is common view these days. There was a period in Germanic generative linguistics when this was under dispute. In the 80ies and early 90ies the issue was about whether all German verb second clauses were indeed CPs, which implies that the initial constituent being in Spec,CP is an operator in a genuine A-bar position (more or less) automatically. This approach, sketched

above in (1)-(3), was and is the prominent approach and has been called the symmetric approach. The most prominent proponent for the other, so-called asymmetric approach was Lisa Travis (1984). Travis argues that subject-initial sentences are fundamentally different from clauses with a non-subject in the prefield position. For her, one of the main pieces of evidence for the distinctness of the initial, preverbal slot becomes clear when it comes to the hosting of the German unstressable pronoun *es*: as the subject it is fine (4), as object it is not (5). This leads her to the structural proposal in (6) vs. (7).

- (4) Es hat das Heu gefressen.
it has the hay eaten (it = the horse)
- (5) *Es hat das Pferd gefressen.
it has the horse eaten (it = the hay)
- (6) [_{IP} Es hat₁ [_{VP} das Heu gefressen t₁]]
- (7) *[_{CP} Es₂ hat₁ [_{IP} das Pferd t'₁ [_{VP} t₂ gefressen t₁]]]

Travis' (1984: 119) argument is that unstressed pronouns may not topicalize, i.e., they may not be A-bar-moved to Spec,CP but can only be A-moved, which for her leads into the subject position Spec,IP. In any event, the given contrast is striking. It becomes especially evident with the pronoun *es*, which is inherently weak – non-accentable and hence unstressed. However, German personal pronouns always come in (at least) two variants: as strong elements – bearing regular accent – and as weak (= deaccented) items (Hall 1999). Travis' argument should therefore concern any unstressed weak pronoun(s). Fanselow points to cases without an overt regular subject as in (8) or (9), where an unstressed pronoun – here in dative case – opens a neutral, potentially all-focus clause.

- (8) Mir ist kalt.
me is cold
'I am cold.'
- (9) Ihm wurde geholfen
him was helped
'He was helped.'

(9) is quite analogous to (10): the Icelandic sentence which is used most often

to illustrate a quirky subject. And this then would mean that German perhaps also has quirky subjects.

(10) *Honum var hjalpáð*

Proponents of the notion quirky subject have listed the differences between the Icelandic (10) and the German (9). Fanselow (2002: 229) quotes reflexivization, subject-verb-inversion, subject position in ECM infinitives, raising and control, and conjunction reduction. He instead strengthens the commonalities and similarities between German and Icelandic and tries to reduce the indisputable differences to other independent factors. For Fanselow, the common and decisive features are: both sentences are verb second clauses and in both an unmarked (non-nominative) pronominal pronoun occupies the first position. This initial constituent in both examples is not an operator, which means that it has not been shifted to the initial position by A-bar-movement in the sense of operator raising (in German linguistics often called “topicalization”). Instead, Fanselow proposes that these sentences are not IPs – as Travis would assume, at least for subject-initial clauses –, but CPs. However, in the cases at hand the specifier is not an A-bar position, but an A-position in the traditional sense. Adapting previous work of Bhatt (1999) on Kashmiri, Fanselow adopts so-called Formal Movement. Formal Movement means that – generatively speaking – in the course of the derivation, the constituent whichever happens to be the highest XP in the middle-field gets promoted to the initial position by a rule of ‘Attract Closest’. Frey (2006: 164) gives the following semi-formal definition:

- (11) $[_{CP} XP [_{C'} V_{fin} [_{IP} \dots]]]$ can be derived from $[_{IP} XP \dots V_{fin}]$ (by moving the finite verb to C and) by moving XP as the highest element of IP to Spec,CP (Attract Closest) just in order to fulfil the EPP requirement associated with C, i.e., without any additional intonational, semantic or pragmatic effects.

Note that such an approach no longer grants a special role to the grammatical subject. What counts is the absolute neutrality of the initial constituent. So, all the examples from (12) and below (mostly taken from or inspired by Fanselow) are unmarked in a semantic, pragmatic, or information-structural (discourse-related) sense. Many of the examples are “all-focus”; crucially they are not hosting a narrow focus or a contrastive topic. All the initial constituents

are neither a subject nor a quantificational expression (i.e., narrow focus, contrastive topic).

- (12) Am Sonntag hat ein Eisbär einen Mann gefressen.
on Sunday has a polar.bear a man eaten
'A polar bear ate a man on Sunday.'
- (13) Einem Kind wurde das Fahrrad gestohlen.
a child was the bike stolen
'The bike was stolen from a child.'
- (14) Der Schauspielerin ist der Text entfallen.
the actress is the text away.fallen
'An actress has forgotten the text.'
- (15) Glücklicherweise hat er angerufen.
fortunately has he called
'Fortunately, he called.'
- (16) Mich friert.
me freezes
'I'm cold.'
- (17) Ihn stört, dass niemand protestiert.
him bothers that nobody protests
'It bothers him that no one protests.'

The crucial argument to claim that the initial position is an A-position is that all these pre-verbal constituents are clause bound. Real operators which move to A-bar-positions can be moved long, i.e., unboundedly into higher matrix clauses. (18) illustrates this with the original object of the embedded clause – an expression which is associated with alternatives and which takes wide scope:

- (18) Den Hans glaube ich nicht, dass die Chefin _ einladen wird.
the Hans believe I not that the boss_{fem} invite will
'As for Hans, I do not believe that the boss will invite him.'

This is not possible with the initial constituents in (12) to (17). Either a quantificational reading is triggered (as in (18)) if the expression is qualified insofar as it allows for a contrastive reading. This is possible in those cases where the expression carries a referential theta-role as an argument or figures

as a suitable “potentially referential” adjunct. Otherwise, if the element cannot be associated with alternatives and hence not induce a quantificational reading, the long movement leads to ungrammaticality. Fanselow’s example is given in (19).

- (19) *Glücklicherweise_i denke ich, dass er t_i angerufen hat.
 fortunately think I that he _ called has
 Intended: ‘I think that fortunately he has called.’

Sentence adverbials cannot be moved across a clause boundary. The word string in (19) is not ungrammatical, but the reading indicated by the structural representation with a trace in the embedded clause makes the sentence unacceptable. The intended interpretation does not exist. Given all this, the conclusion is that in this type of verb second clauses the initial element occupies an A-position, which, however, is different from a regular subject position.

2. Fanselow’s Formal Movement Approach Applied to More Types of Expressions

2.1. Object-*es*

Put informally, Formal Movement means that whatever in the course of the derivation ends up in the highest position of the middle-field can [or must] be moved to and appear in the initial position of a verb second clause. As a consequence, this means that if one can construct a string such that an object *es* is the first item within a clause, such an *es* should be acceptable in the prefield. That this is so has been discussed and partly analyzed in Meinunger (2007). Corpus research as well as a closer look at native intuition proves that object *es* in the initial position is fully acceptable.

- (20) [Wo kommt das Buch her?] Es muss doch jemand
 [Where does the book come from?] it must MP someone
 dahingelegt haben.
 there.put have
 ‘Someone must have put it there.’

A corresponding embedded verb final clause containing the same lexical material would realize the object pronoun in the closest position linearly next to the complementizer position; (21). Formal Movement applied to the lower

structure in (21) would correctly produce (20). On the other hand, true operator A-bar-movement cannot apply. Travis is right in claiming that unstressed *es* cannot “act” as an operator: hence long movement is excluded, similar as in (19), here proven by (22).

(21) ... weil es doch jemand dahin gelegt haben muss.

(22) *Es glaube ich, dass jemand es dahin gelegt haben muss.

As Fanselow states it, as well as Bhatt (1999) and Frey (2006) assume, Formal Movement is a blind process, i.e., an “automatic” derivational step. In what follows I will argue that there is an important restriction meaning that additional factors delimit the application of Formal Movement.

2.2. Further Potential Formal Movement Targets: Modal Particles (MPs)

If (21) and similar structures give rise to verb second clauses, one should expect that also MPs end up in the clause initial position. In German, deaccented pronouns are often realized in the so-called ‘Wackernagel area’, the slot immediately following the complementizer in subordinate clauses (or after the finite verb in verb second clauses). All other major constituents occur deeper and therefore linearly more to the right. A similar scenario can be created with MPs, which surface in a position which is higher than VP-internal arguments such as indefinite existential pronouns (Diesing 1990, Meinunger 2000), including subject pronouns.

(23) weil halt niemand gern verliert.
because MP nobody gladly loses
‘since no one likes to lose.’

(24) weil eh keiner kommt.
because MP nobody comes
‘since MP nobody comes anyway.’

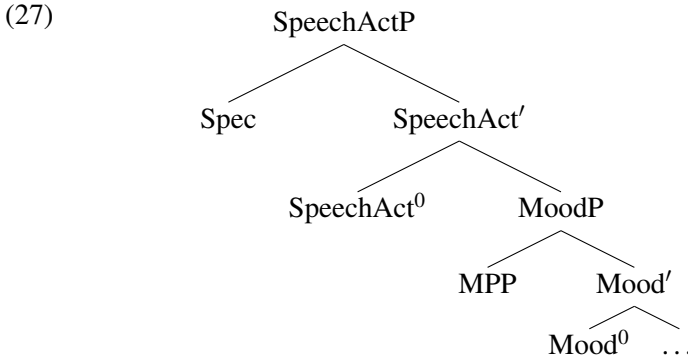
Yet, MPs are known to not be licit in the prefield.

(25) *Halt verliert niemand gern.

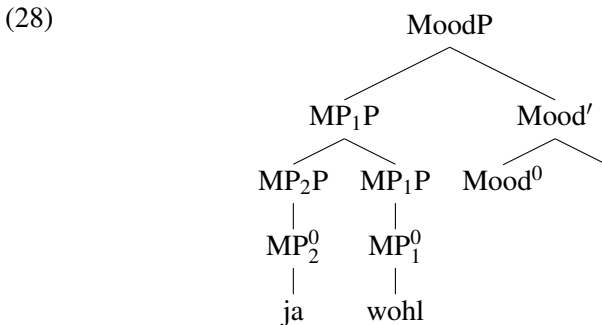
(26) *Eh kommt keiner.

(25) and (26) illustrate the commonly accepted view that MPs are not allowed to surface in Spec,CP. The alleged explanation is the following: MPs are

argued to be impossible to appear in the prefield because of their status as weak elements: they cannot be coordinated, stressed etc., hence they are taken to be heads (=X⁰), and heads cannot be fronted to a position reserved for maximal projections. A very prominent analysis to this effect comes from Coniglio (2011). The structure Coniglio offers is given in (27). Adverbials appear as specifiers of verbal heads. The relevant projection is a MoodPhrase:



Coniglio assumes that MPs derive diachronically from weak adverbials. Thus, it is conceivable that they occupy the same positions. In the process of grammaticalization they lose essential features and become deficient categories, much like clitic pronouns in the sense of Cardinaletti (2007). Finally, the former maximal projection collapses to just a head element (X⁰); see Coniglio (2011: 120):



In the end, the particle nodes MPP (MP₁P, MP₂P) become invisible, and only a head (MP⁰) appears in the structure, which then cannot move to a specifier position such as Spec,CP. Such a movement would be ruled out by Emonds' classic Structure-preserving Constraint, the principle which states that a moved

constituent may only be substituted for a category of the same type (Emonds 1976). The (structure removal) step from MPP to MP⁰ remains mysterious and is not justified and hence not convincing. There seems to be no reason that MPs are fundamentally different from *es*. The parallelism with weak pronominal elements is indeed comprehensible. The classic stance is that X⁰-elements cannot appear in positions where a maximal XP constituent is required. Weak pronouns enter the syntactic component as heads; they are of the category X⁰, or D⁰ more precisely. In situations where they act as true constituents, they are considered to be intransitive realizations of the corresponding XP – no complement, no specifier, nor any adjunct:

- (29) a. [DP [D' D⁰ (= er, sie, es)]] or
 b.
$$\begin{array}{c} \text{DP} \\ | \\ \text{D}' \\ | \\ \text{D}^0 \\ | \\ \text{es (er/sie/...)} \end{array}$$

In some cases, these pronouns might optionally lose their XP-status and cliticize, but not necessarily. There is always the option that the elements survive as DPs and can so occupy a specifier position, such as the prefield as in (20). The reason why MPs are different from pronouns with respect to the ability to appear in the initial position is (argued to be) different. This will be proposed in the following section.

3. Forbidden Items in the Initial Position

3.1. Commitment Adverbials

It seems that for a semantic reason, some instances of movement to the German initial position seems to be illicit. In his work on the syntacticization of speech act related pragmatics, Krifka (2021, 2023) identifies a class of adverbial expressions which also resist movement to the initial position. He observes that some specific adverbs are not good in the initial position.

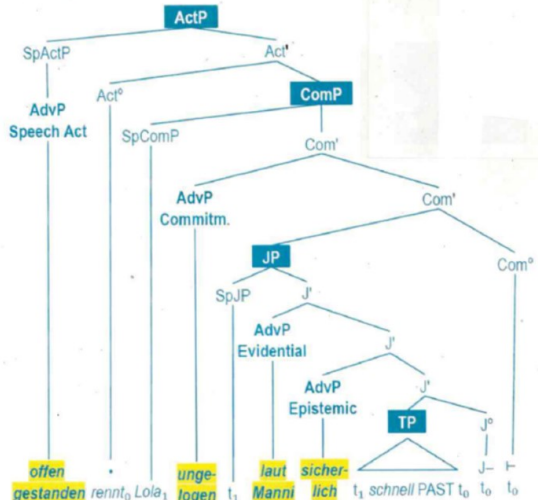
- (30) *Bei Gott / *Ohne Scheiß / *Ungelogen ... schnarcht Max sehr
 by god / without shit / „unlied” snores Max very
 laut.
 loudly.
 ‘By god / no kidding / honestly, Max snores very loudly.’

Krifka argues that what he analyzes as commitment modifiers are not possible in the prefield. Basing his work on the language philosophical literature by Frege and Pierce, Krifka assumes three acts which all take part in the emergence of a statement: (i) the conception of a thought – the thinking, (ii) the appreciation of the truth of the thought – the judging, and (iii) the manifestation of the judgement – the asserting. In the tradition of syntacticization of discourse (Speas and Tenny 2003, Haegeman and Hill 2013), Krifka syntactizes these objects and assigns syntactic layers to these notions. The thinking concerns the truth conditional side and is mapped onto the traditional TP layer, the judgement layer reflects the concept of speaker-internal, i.e., “private” evaluation of the proposition (likelihood, reliability, etc.), which partly goes beyond the purely truth-conditional assessment: JP. Finally, the speech act layer expresses the speaker’s intention overtly (= public act), in case of an assertion: the claim in form of an ActP. Crucially, Krifka assumes and introduces a further step associated with an additional layer for the commitment: ComP. The commitment is about the judgement, hence it takes this as its complement. In turn, ComP serves as the input to the very speech act – being the final complete object for acting. The syntactic skeleton of a complete speech act is represented in (31). It shows the hierarchy of the acts represented as structural building blocks for a speech act.

(31)

Why this syntactic representation?

- Position of sentence adverbs
- Judgement Phrase
 - Subjective epistemic modifiers e.g. *sicherlich* 'certainly'
 - Evidential modifiers e.g. *anscheinend* 'apparently', *laut Manni* 'according to Manni'
- Commitment Phrase
 - Commitment modifiers e.g. *ungelogen* "not lyingly", 'truly'
- Act Phrases
 - Speech act specifiers e.g. *offen gestanden* 'frankly'
- Cf. Cinque 1998, hierarchy of adverbials:
 - Speech Act > > (Evaluation) > Evidentiality > Epistemics
 - ↑ Commitment



(taken over from Krifka 2021: 5)

The tree in (31) is similar to (yet different from) the proposal by Cinque (1999). In a similar way, adverbial expressions are associated with the specific layers, where they appear as modifiers. In such a system, one encounters three types of high adverbials: among them, the lowest group contains adverbs of judgment such as epistemic, evidential and evaluative expressions; examples are given in (32). The hierarchically next group above the adverbs of judgment contains commitment modifiers such as in (30) or (33). The highest modifiers are the speech act adverbs as in (34).

(32) *sicherlich* / *möglicherweise* / *offenbar* / *angeblich* /
 certainly / possibly~perhaps / obviously / allegedly /
glücklicherweise / *leider*
 fortunately / unfortunately

(33) *ungelogen* / *wahrhaft* / *wirklich* / *ernsthaft*
 truly / really... / really~indeed / seriously

- (34) ehrlich gesagt / offen gestanden / übrigens / nebenbei bemerkt
 honestly / frankly / both: by the way

The crucial observation is the following. All three types are fine in the upper middle field, i.e., after the finite verb in verb second clauses.

- (35) Max schnarcht {angeblich / ungelogen / übrigens} sehr laut.

This is different for the initial position: speech act adverbs are fine, so are judgment modifiers; commitment modifiers are bad: (36) shows the contrast: speech act (*übrigens*) and judgement (*angeblich*) are unproblematic; commitment (*ungelogen*) is impossible there. (37) shows this with a whole series of such expressions: commitment modifiers seem to not be legitimate in the initial position (also see (30)).

- (36) {Angeblich / *Ungelogen / Übrigens} schnarcht Max extrem laut.

- (37) {*Bei Gott / *Wirklich / *Ehrlich / *Ohne Scheiß} schnarcht Max extrem laut.

Krifka's explanation goes like this: commitment modifiers do not belong to the part of the clause which is to be taken as the communicated proposition, i.e., they do not belong to the part of the clause where the truth conditions are spelled out. This, however, he argues, is obligatory for expressions in this position. This approach seems reasonable, but it appears that it cannot thoroughly cover the facts. On the one hand, it is clear that the highest adverbials relating to speech act may well be placed in the initial position. Note that it is taken for granted that they do not belong to the communicated proposition.¹ On the other hand, some adverbials which should be classified as commitment expressions appear to be possible in the initial position. The following adverbs surface as initial expressions before the finite verb without problems: *tatsächlich* (indeed), *unter Garantie* (under guarantee/warranty), *in Wirklichkeit* (in reality), *im Ernst/ernsthaft* (both: in earnest / seriously). Krifka observes this too and partly offers a solution. He argues that in the relevant cases, the expression is used rather as a modifier of a different sort; i.e., often re-interpreted mostly as an epistemic judgement adverbial as in

¹There is an ongoing discussion whether and if so to which degree judgement expressions such as epistemic or evidential modifiers have a use-conditional effect. I go with linguists like Pandarova (2023), who provide evidence for it.

the case of *tatsächlich*. As for *ehrlich* (honestly), Krifka argues that it is a commitment adverbial and hence illicit in the prefield position, but that it counts as a speech act modifier in the form of *ehrlich gesagt* (also honestly), which then can occupy the initial position. The proposal in Meinunger (2022), which shall be endorsed here, is a different one. The claim is that the decisive feature is expressivity and that purely expressive items are prohibited from appearing as the sole occupants of the prefield.

3.2. Back to Modal Particles and other Candidates

Contemporary mainstream semantics differentiates the following two main types of meaning: descriptive meaning and expressive meaning (Cruse (2004)). Descriptive meaning is truth conditional, expressive meaning is not; it is emphatic, subjective, connotational, emotive, affective, colored etc. Now, expressive lexical items can be broken down again into two classes. The important classification of expressive items goes back to Cruse as well: expressive items can be purely use-conditional, in which case they are called uni-dimensional (Gutzmann 2013). Bi-dimensional expressives, in contrast, convey a clear portion of descriptive, i.e., truth-conditional, meaning. For the former, Gutzmann lists expressive adjectives like *damn*, *fuckin(g)*, *bloody* etc., which can appear inserted inside regular complex, syntactically well-formed structures as in (38).

(38) But me, my eyes were wide fuckin' open.

Expressions like *fuckin'* in (38) do not add any descriptive (referential) meaning with any effect on the truth of the sentence. For the two-dimensional expressives, on the other hand, Gutzmann cites pronouns like German *du* versus *Sie* ('you, familiar vs. polite'), where the expressive component is linked to the social component (formal addressing, social hierarchy, etc.), and the descriptive meaning is the referential potential to point to the addressee. Interestingly – basing himself on the vast literature – Gutzmann classifies German modal particles as purely expressive, i.e., exclusively use-conditional. In light of all this, the claim here is the following: the decisive feature for prefield phobia is the purely expressive content of the relevant expression. Thus, the characteristics of the prefield avoiders are clear: exclusive expressiveness. This applies to modal particles and it applies to most commitment adverbials – but not to all. Commitment expressions often – or even typically – but not necessarily come as purely expressive items such as in *echt*, *wirklich*,

ohne Scheiß, ungelogen but not in rather neutral shape and with semantic contribution such as in *in der Tat, unter Garantie*. Similarly, speech act adverbials can be neutral. In this case they are not relevant for the message; i.e., they do not contribute to the truth conditions of the assertive part of the sentence, but they can be refused or denied. In rare cases they can come in purely emphatic fashion, which then results in ungrammaticality; recall Krifka's example *ehrlich* from above and illustrated here; or *ganz offen, unter uns*, etc. See (39) vs. (40).

- (39) *Ehrlich / *ganz offen / *unter uns bin ich enttäuscht von ihm.
 (40) Ehrlich gesagt / ganz offen gestanden / unter uns gesagt bin ich enttäuscht von ihm.
 'Honestly / frankly / between us, I am disappointed with him.'

There is evidence that the longer forms in (40) have descriptive content, whereas the shorter forms in (39) are purely expressive, which excludes them in the prefield (Meinunger 2022: 720, after Meinunger 2009).

3.3. A Hitherto Neglected Class

In Meinunger (2022), I draw the attention to a class of adverbs which also cannot appear as the sole element in the initial position. Examples are *regelrecht, geradezu, schier, richtig[gehend], schlechthin, schlechtweg, schlichtweg, nachgerade, buchstäblich*. It is almost as hard as with modal particles to translate them (into English). They all mean roughly the same. The best option is *buchstäblich*, which obviously should be translated as *literally*; all the others are very similar in their semantic contribution. Another frequent proposal by dictionaries or translation programs is *downright*. See the following examples, which illustrate that these expressions cannot occupy the initial position.

- (41) Er war regelrecht am Verzweifeln.
 he was downright on.the despair
 'He was downright despairing.'
 (42) *Regelrecht war er am Verzweifeln.
 (43) Der Sturm hat nachgerade gewütet.
 the storm has literally raged
 'The storm has literally raged.'
 (44) *Nachgerade hat der Sturm gewütet.

The argument is that these expressions are thoroughly expressive. As stated above, there is not much research on this type of adverbs. The German handbook on connectors subsumes them under intensifiers and assimilates them to degree modifiers such as *sehr* (very) or *besonders* (especially, particularly) (cf. Breindl 2009). Indeed, there is something intensifying about them; but the argument put forth here as in Meinunger (2022) is that the intensifying effect comes along as a pragmatic result. However, the degree expressions *sehr* and *besonders* do have a clear truth-conditional impact. Their semantics is amplification, they combine with their targets in a compositional way. All this makes them different from the prefield phobics, and not surprisingly one finds examples where these expressions are fine in the initial position.

- (45) *Sehr* hat es uns im Gebirge gefallen.
 very has it us in.the mountains pleased
 ‘We liked it very much in the mountains.’
- (46) *Besonders* waren ihr seine Hände aufgefallen.
 especially were her his hands noticed
 ‘Especially his hands had caught her eye.’

A very instructive contribution to the topic comes from Israel (2002). Israel’s article is exclusively on the English adverb *literally* – the corresponding expression to German *buchstäblich* (and perhaps the similar *wortwörtlich*). He shows that in the course of language change *literally* more and more adopted a metalinguistic meaning which sets it apart from other classic intensifiers. So, today it cannot be used to intensify a scalar predicate.

- (47) Marlene is very/really/truly/*literally tall.

Israel goes on and argues that *literally* is thoroughly expressive: “*literally* has undergone a significant shift from a textual, metalinguistic function to an expressive, meta-performative function. Where earlier it served to arbitrate between ways of interpreting a sentence, now it marks the seriousness with which a sentence is used . . . *literally* cannot be used to express an objective judgement about the degree to which a predicate holds; rather it seems to require a more subjective sort of judgement about the appropriateness of describing the world in a particular sort of way” (Israel 2002: 428/429).

In Meinunger (2022) I take this claim about *literally* from Israel and apply it to all the German expressions listed in italics from the first paragraph

of this section (3.3). The same applies to slightly different expressions such as *durchaus*, *sozusagen*, *direkt*, *ziemlich* and others. Again, they are hardly translatable, arguably free of truth-conditional content but thoroughly subjectively expressive and hence: not possible in the initial position.

3.4. Some More Expressives

The classical research on expressivity (e.g., Potts (2005), also Cruse 2004, among many others) popularized such expressions as *damn*, *fucking*, *bloody* etc. as quite typical representatives. German counterparts to *damn* would be *verdammt* and *verdammt nochmal*. Similarly, drawing from the religiously tabooed lexical source area delivers us expressions with *Teufel* (devil), *Satan*, *Hölle* (hell). It does not come as a surprise that these expressions are not licit in the prefield either. Like speech act modifiers in general and many commitment modifiers, these expressives are fine in the middle field (see (48), (49), (52)), interestingly also in front of a verb second clause (in the so-called “linke Außenfeld-Position”, see (50)) – but not in the regular prefield (see (51) or (53)).

(48) Dazu hast du verdammt nochmal kein Recht!
 there.to have you damn again no right
 ‘You have no fucking right to do that!’

(49) Du hast verdammt nochmal kein Recht dazu!

(50) Verdammt nochmal, dazu hast du kein Recht.

(51) *Verdammt nochmal hast du kein Recht dazu.

(52) [Es kann halt nicht jeder nach AC/DC klingen und] das ist
 it can MP not everybody after AC/DC sound and that is
 zum Teufel auch gut so.
 to.the devil also good so
 ‘Not everyone can sound like AC/DC, and that’s a damn good thing.’

(53) *[Es kann halt nicht jeder nach AC/DC klingen und] zum Teufel ist das
 auch gut so.

A last expression as representative from the purely expressive items is *bitte* (please). A relatively unnoticed fact is that this element cannot be placed in the prefield. If used as an integral part of a clause, it mostly surfaces within the middle field, which is due to the fact that it normally occurs inside imperative

clauses or wishes uttered in form of a polarity (yes:no question), both types leaving the prefield empty; see (54). But it is possible to place it inside verb second clauses which are used as commands; see (55); and also in the position before the regular prefield, as in (50); see (56). But again: it cannot be placed as sole expressions in the initial position (57).

(54) Bleiben Sie bitte stehen!
 remain you “please” stand
 ‘Stop right there, please!’

(55) Den ausgefüllten Bogen legst du dann bitte auf den Tisch dort.
 the filled.out form put you then “please” on the table there
 ‘Please put the completed form on the table there!’

(56) Bitte, den ausgefüllten Bogen legst du dann auf den Tisch dort.

(57) *Bitte legst du den ausgefüllten Bogen dann auf den Tisch dort.

The lexico-semantic status of *bitte* is not clear. It cannot be grouped into one of Krifka’s high modifiers; nor does it seem to form a natural class with other similar elements. Öller and Wurmbrand (2017: 203) try to analyze it as an analogue of *gern* (gladly) in modal statements. Describing the semantic impact of *bitte*, one realizes its similarity to modal particles: “adverbial *bitte* ‘please’ ... tones down the order to a polite request and/or intensifies the speaker’s desire that the state of affairs expressed by the modal sentence is indeed instantiated.” Hence, it seems it is again a purely expressive function which this element carries out – no truth conditional impact.

4. Conclusion

On the one hand, Gibert Fanselow’s analysis generating German V2 sentences from 2002 was confirmed by an observation on the distribution of unstressed pronouns; on the other hand it was further modified by showing that a certain class of expressions cannot be involved in the occupation of the prefield – neither by operator movement nor by Formal Movement. It was shown that Fanselow’s idea that in maximally unmarked declarative sentences not only the subject but more generally the highest constituent can occur initially, where it is raised by the operation Attract Closest (= Formal Movement), predicts that under certain conditions the inherently weak pronoun *es* can also occur in object function sentence-initially. This makes the approach stronger than

the so-called asymmetric theories of verb second (à la Travis 1984). What is more, it has been shown that certain expressions, even if they occur as highest middle field expressions in right adjacency to C⁰, cannot be captured by Formal Movement. The reason lies in their semantics as purely expressive expressions. These include modal particles, most commitment adverbials, and other non-truth-conditional expressive emphatic expressions. A special class was identified that contains intensifying expressions such as *regelrecht* (downright) or *buchstäblich* (literally) and other similar expressions.

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